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Marxism Today

MARGARET HUNTER — ON THE 26th CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

ALAN G. MORTON — A HUNDRED YEARS OF DARWIN'S 'ORIGIN OF SPECIES'

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DISCUSSION:

G. HUDSON — ON THE NATURE OF MUSIC

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Marxism Today

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Twenty-Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain

Margaret Hunter

IN April, 1957, when our Twenty-Fifth Special Congress met, our Party had already come through the ideological fire with honour. That Congress consolidated our victory and laid the basis for the advance reflected in our Twenty-Sixth National Congress.

The Twenty-Sixth Congress demonstrated the recovery of the Party and expressed great confidence, unity and enthusiasm.

This confidence arose from a fighting, campaigning recovery over the last two years. The struggles of the working class and people since 1957 have found the Communists increasingly involved in them, giving purpose and direction to an increasing extent, having overcome the preoccupation with internal matters and now boldly giving mass, public leadership.

The deepening economic crisis, with growing unemployment and short-time working, has come to a head at the same time as a great technical advance has taken place, so that the contradiction between production possibilities and the consumption of the people will be greatly increased in the years ahead.

In his report to Congress, John Gollan exposed the Labour policy for curing economic crisis by encouraging private capitalism to expand. The way forward lies in the development of the wages struggle, for three-quarters of British production is sold in Britain itself. If wages don't go up the economic difficulties will get worse.

The central slogan for the working class advanced by the Congress was: "No Return to the Hungry Thirties!"

And the great mass lobbies of the Welsh and Scottish miners, as well as the powerful demonstration of the Lancashire Labour movement against pit closures and for full employment have demonstrated the determination of growing numbers of working people to act in the spirit of the fighting call made by our Congress.

Astonishing changes have taken place in the world since Churchill made his infamous Cold War speech at Fulton in 1947. Socialism is clearly demonstrating its superiority over capitalism. The national liberation movement is advancing by leaps and bounds.

Peace and National Independence

Because of these tremendous advances, coupled with the struggles of the working people in the capitalist countries, the balance of forces in the world shows that world war can be excluded from society even before the triumph of socialism.

That was why the note was sounded at the Congress: "If all who want peace increase their efforts the cold war can now be ended."

At the same time a sharp note of warning was uttered about the acute danger of a new war. Stress was laid on the urgent need to solve the German question, the greatest source of danger in Europe. The Congress called for a Summit Conference, no nuclear weapons for West Germany, recognition of the German Democratic Republic, readiness to discuss seriously the Soviet proposals on Berlin and the German Peace Treaty.

On this and the crucial question of stopping the tests, there needs to be the utmost activity by all who want peace, especially by the great Labour movement. In this struggle, as in all the struggles of the working class and people, the Communist Party is the only political party carrying on a powerful battle for peace on all fronts, concerning itself not only with nuclear disarmament, but with a peace treaty with Germany and the ending of colonial repression in all its forms.

Congress cleared up some mistaken ideas about our attitude to the demand for the unilateral banning of the H-bomb. John Gollan pointed out that the Communist Party has always been against the bomb. We were the only political party in the last General Election to oppose its manufacture, and we still do. The question is what policy will unite the greatest number of people to get rid of the bomb. Experience has shown that unilateralism only divides the movement, and diverts attention from the real issue, namely, international

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agreement to ban nuclear weapons. This is the only way to banish the menace of nuclear war and also the issue on which the greatest number of people agree. The problem is to get that agreement turned into action.

Now that the Foreign Ministers of Britain, France, U.S.A., and U.S.S.R. are due to meet on May 11th, it is absolutely essential that the whole weight of the Labour movement and all who desire peace is brought to bear on them to prevent any hold-up of the Summit Conference so urgently needed to settle outstanding questions, especially concerning Berlin, disengagement in Europe and no nuclear weapons for West Germany. The Aldermaston March at Easter coincided with our Twenty-Sixth Congress. That powerful demonstration against nuclear weapons needs now to be carried forward on the broadest front, without bans or proscriptions, to compel a Summit Conference and to demand the beginning of the end of the Cold War and the ruinous arms race.

National Liberation

Outstanding in the effort for world peace is the great and swiftly moving struggle for national liberation.

The Bandung Conference in 1955 marked a new stage in the struggle and has been followed by great advances in the Arab world. Then came the Conference at Accra. And now the tidal wave of the liberation struggle is swelling in all the African colonies, shaking the foundations of imperialist rule. Never was it more important to work to build a close alliance with the colonial peoples. This was repeated again and again in Congress, which recognised that we have a great responsibility situated as we are at the centre of the world's largest colonial empire.

The Political Situation in Britain

With a General Election looming up the Congress devoted much attention to the character of the struggle that will be needed to defeat the Tories.

The Communist Party works for the defeat of the Tories and the return of a Labour majority, with Communist M.P.s. Eighteen Communist candidates have been selected and the Party will make the biggest effort to achieve a big increase in the Communist vote and to achieve Communist M.P.s. In every constituency we want our branches to become the spearhead of the anti-Tory struggle. Congress called for the formation of united anti-Tory Committees in all localities, factories and pits, rousing the movement for struggle and for the election campaign.

At the same time it was made clear by Congress that it is essential to change Labour policy. We cannot accept the view that the struggle for a new Labour policy is over because of the decisions taken at Scarborough last year. All experience shows that the watered down policy of "managed capitalism" instead of attracting the so-called "floating voter" is drowning all prospects of winning support and defeating the Tories.

The key to securing a new Labour policy is united action, with the rallying of the Left and militant forces in the Labour movement, and the building of the Communist Party.

The revisionists wanted to bury our Party, to follow into the grave already dug for socialism by the right wing (The Future Labour Offers—every Socialist a shareholder—every exploited wage-slave an exploiter!).

From the strong position of our Twenty-Sixth Congress it is easy to appraise the role of the revisionists—to see all their errors in the light of experience—and it is worthwhile casting a grateful glance back to that Twenty-Fifth Congress which saw all these dangers *at the time,* nailed them decisively, and cleared the way for the advance of the Party.

The "Changed Capitalism" Myth

In the two years from the Twenty-Fifth to the Twenty-Sixth Congress, the class issues have steadily become clearer. Half-a-million unemployed and the myth of "changed capitalism" is sadly shaken, if not yet killed stone dead. On every hand the need for our Party stands out more sharply.

In Scotland we had a vivid demonstration of this on the issue of rocket bases.

Perhaps partly because we are a small nation of 5 million people, with a small territory of 7,000 square miles, we were hyper-conscious of the danger represented by Macmillan's announcement from the N.A.T.O. talks in Paris 1957, that American rocket bases would be set up in Britain.

Reaching new depths in abject, wanton abandonment of British interests, Macmillan rushed in to console the Yankees for their rebuff at the hands of the Danes and Norwegians who, clinging to some remnant of sanity, refused to countenance the Dulles-Eisenhower demand for bases on their soil.

Our Party went into action the moment the press announcements clearly indicated the intention to establish these bases on the north coast of Scotland. Finally most of the key organisations of the Labour movement, a series of the main town and city councils, Church organisations and individual leading figures in Scottish life expressed their opposition to American rocket bases.

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From the trade union branches the campaign spread to the trades councils, and from there to the town councils and the M.P.s.

Building workers' branches declared work on such sites black, although the threat of unemployment was looming in the building trade, where we now have 22,000 on the dole.

For almost all the town councils concerned the adoption of a declaration on a national political issue was a new departure.

The main lesson we drew from this experience was that our Party truly stood at the head of the Scottish people, for if we had not moved speedily and decisively to agitate and explain, to generate action in the Labour movement and beyond, then we might have rocket bases saddled on us now.

Certainly some militants and patriots would have spoken out—but there would not have been that co-ordinated expression of the will of the people which causes Governments to think twice.

Secondly we say that when the issue is ripe and the Party acts decisively—all kinds of barriers can be bent a little if not entirely broken. Thus the impressive nature of our campaign made some leading people in the Labour movement amenable to talk with us in a way they would not normally have done.

Another small, but interesting illustration of this same point. We were in great difficulty getting materials printed for the campaign, because of the impending holidays. Having made countless phone calls we finally expressed exasperation to yet another printer who was refusing the order.

"What is it you're so desperate to get printed at this time of year?" he asked. "Just five words", we said, "on 5,000 small posters: NO ROCKET BASES IN SCOTLAND", and went on to express our disapproval of a situation where the whole printing trade in Glasgow could not rise to such an occasion. Pause at the other end—then says the printer—"Well, I certainly think something should be done about that"—and he agreed to deliver the goods in 24 hours.

Thirdly, we could see that on such active campaigns we have the best conditions for stirring up the ideological battle—for in the propaganda meetings, discussions in the Labour movement etc., our comrades were able to show how the ruling class has trampled on its "very own" banner, "Rule Britannia".

It must be said, however, that in Scotland we have not yet learned how to help the Peace forces form a stable Peace movement. The Twenty-Sixth Congress has redirected our attention to this need in a helpful way, and we are working now to see that Scotland sends a 100-strong delegation to the June 28th Demonstration organised by the British Peace Committee as a first step towards such a development.

Lastly, the whole campaign against the rocket bases had a tonic effect on the Party, creating new pride and confidence which partly laid the basis for our later recruitment successes.

The Fight for Work and Wages

A further clear demonstration of the indispensability of our Party is given daily in the fight for work and wages.

Everywhere the dead hand of the right wing seeks to choke this struggle with the cry "wait and elect a Labour Government." "Whatever you do—don't do anything." "Pit closures are inevitable", said Gaitskell.

This struggle for work in one factory illustrates all our arguments. A threat of redundancy develops. There is a stir amongst the workers. They want action. The right wing convenor of Shop Stewards refuses to move—wants no action. Two Communists in the factory fight for action. A mass meeting is called. The Communists advance clear-cut proposals for action. Right-wing convenor opposes—is defeated. Deputation of five stewards is elected to further necessary action. Campaign is got under way. Two non-Party stewards on the deputation join the Party, and a further four join in the course of the struggle—the right-wing convenor is discredited—workers secure at least a temporary victory on the redundancy question.

Here we can surely see in microcosm the whole necessary process for the way forward to Socialism.

The need for struggle confronts the workers—whatever ideas the right wing may seek to foist on them, the need for struggle asserts itself. The Party is the only force able to give decisive leadership to the struggle—where the Party gives this leadership it will grow and develop—the right wing will either have to march or isolate itself. The days of right-wing domination are numbered.

When we visualise the development of such struggles—multiplied ten-thousand-fold, we see the united action which will be the basis for political unity of the working class and the isolation and defeat of the right wing.

Every struggle is a school—from the smallest struggle with a foreman and ratefixer about the price on a job, to the large-scale struggles such as that in defence of the convenor at Handley Page.

But if the struggles are to be effective and the workers to have the opportunity to draw the correct lessons, the presence of the Party is vital.

Therefore, the correctness of the twin call of

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the Twenty-Sixth Congress—for the building of the Party and working class unity in action.

Building the Party

In approaching the next stage of our Party building campaign great emphasis needs to be placed on the factories, pits and shipyards. In every District we should regard every industrial establishment where there are no Communists as a vital position, to be captured in the class way to which John Gollan referred in his report.

We learned this much in the last two years—that even *one* or *two* Communists in an industrial establishment can guarantee that leadership is given in struggles, because they belong to a Party that is organised for the job.

So while paying a great deal of attention to the extension and improvement of our present factory organisation, it is a matter of urgency to *widen* the base of Communist leadership by breaking new ground in the factories, pits and shipyards.

On taking a general glance at the work and wages battlefield, it is clear that the Party has a tremendous ideological task, to combat right-wing ideology as expressed in "wage freezing" and in "wait and return a Labour Government."

Work such as that being done by the Polkemmet pit branch of the Party is the model we need to spread to every factory and pit branch. Last Saturday morning from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., twenty-one miners attended the sixth in a series of education classes run by the branch. There was a total attendance of ninety-three at the six classes with three or four non-Party miners at each. Three recruits were made in the course of the classes.

Given the active leadership of the struggle, plus the widespread development of such ideological work in the factories, pits and shipyards, and we can see the end of right-wing domination of the movement and the beginning of the conditions for the victory of the working class.

The Twenty-Sixth Congress asked us to increase our membership to 34,000 and win a further 7,000 recruits in the shortest possible time.

A number of factors make it possible for us to do this, provided we work correctly:

(*a*) There are many more than 7,000 men and women in this country at this moment for whom socialism is an accepted aim.

(*b*) Hundreds of thousands are being jolted into thinking about one or more of the problems created by capitalism—war—unemployment—high rents.

(*c*) The successes of socialism are making a growing impression on hundreds of thousands of people.

Categories (*b*) and (*c*) we must work to win closer by means of widespread public propaganda. This summer and autumn we need to make the voice of the Party ring out as never before at the factories, pitheads, streets and backcourts.

The Municipal and General Election campaigns provide just the opportunity we need—to take the Party policy in speech and literature to a record number of people.

Already we see a steady trickle of applications sent in on the forms incorporated in *Which Way for Socialists* and *The Future in your Hands*. This will grow steadily with the growth of sales.

Category (*a*) needs special attention. It comprises the militants of the Labour movement, many of whom wish to see socialism established, but are confused by the teaching of Messrs. Attlee and Gaitskell and the "new thinkers".

To win some thousands of these men and women is a key question, and our September to March building campaign gave many instances of how it can be done.

In Metro-Vickers factory in Glasgow, where a Communist is the Convenor of Shop Stewards, he set about influencing the militants around him by winning them to read the *Daily Worker* every day.

On this basis, and by consistent discussions, he won seven of his fellow shop stewards to the Party.

It sounds too simple—but this conscious use of the *Daily Worker* as organiser and builder of the Party is all too rare. We need to face up to the job of applying it everywhere now, to meet the call of the Twenty-Sixth Congress for a real fight on *Daily Worker* circulation.

In Bathgate, West Lothian, Drew Hendry has long been active in the Labour movement and like hundreds of other comrades knows all the people in the movement.

The Bathgate Branch organised a series of open discussion meetings—on aspects of *The British Road*. These discussions got down to the ideas that separated the lads from us, and five joined on the basis of arriving at agreement on principle. All five were militants of the local Labour movement. One of these recruits is now our Communist candidate fighting in Bathgate.

To get to the militants we must first win all our comrades who are in daily contact with them for the idea that they should consciously work to bring these comrades into the Party.

This personal work, proper use of the *Daily Worker* and the winning of all Party Branches to organise regular open discussion meetings on policy and fundamentals, are the methods we must concentrate on to win the militants.

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A Hundred Years of Darwin's 'Origin of Species'

Alan G. Morton

THE appearance of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in November 1859 was one of the great revolutionary advances in human thought, comparable to the appearance of Newton's *Principia,* and like Newton's work having philosophical and social consequences far beyond the field of natural science with which it was immediately concerned. It was Darwin who first revealed the fundamental law of movement, of the development and change, of living organisms, thus bringing the phenomenon of life and living things within the scope of natural science. Of course Darwin did not create his theoretical ideas out of the blue. Others before him, notably Lamarck, working in his museum through the French Revolution, and his own grandfather, the sturdy, common-sense eccentric Erasmus Darwin, had propounded ideas of the natural evolution of living beings. In 1858 Alfred Russel Wallace independently reached the same conclusions as Darwin, just as the latter was concluding twenty years' labour in preparation for the *Origin.* But it was in Darwin's work that the law of development of living organisms was first stated with the broad sweep of full scientific clarity, firmly based on an encyclopedic array of incontrovertible facts, marshalled with disarming fairness yet with such brilliant mastery that the triumph of the new ideas was assured beyond doubt. Not only did Darwin transform biology from a collection of interesting facts to a real experimental science in its own right; by showing how living organisms developed and evolved according to natural laws, he brought life within the framework of consistent materialism, and profoundly weakened the position of those who try to use the great complexity of living systems to support idealist, religious and vitalistic conceptions.

The profound and revolutionary influence of Darwin both on biological and philosophical thought is shown, among other things, by the vast mountain of comment and discussion piled up over the intervening years and very notably increased in this centenary year. To add a mole-hill of originality is probably now impossible, and in this short article I can only pass discursively over a few aspects of Darwin's work which seem to me of special interest and relevance at the present time.

The Theory of Evolution

It is interesting to consider for a few moments the historical setting in which the *Origin of Species* was produced. The fact that at this period evolution ceased to be a speculation and became a proven scientific theory was not accidental: it was closely related to the social and technological changes connected with the rise of industrial capitalism. Darwin himself sprang from the new middle class, created by the industrial revolution, "younger sons of the squirearchy" turning not to the old professions of law and the church but to the new professions connected with medicine, industry and developing science. The accumulation of new facts which rendered necessary and possible the theoretical transformation of biology was intimately connected with the rise of capitalism, as is strikingly exemplified in the sources of Darwin's own thought. The development of geology, linked with the growth of mining and later of canal and rail transport, provided abundant evidence of the immensely greater age of the earth than orthodox religious theory admitted, and of the existence (as evidenced by fossil remains) of earlier and different forms of life. Darwin was intensely interested in geology and familiar with these facts. The explorations of the earth, connected with colonial expansion and the search for fresh raw materials, produced a wealth of new facts and problems demanding explanation. As naturalist on the voyage of the *Beagle* Darwin industriously collected a mass of observations, the value of which in developing his ideas he repeatedly emphasised. Finally the rise of capitalist farming in Britain provided the conditions in which, for the first time in the world, systematic and properly recorded breeding experiments with animals and plants became possible. Darwin took immense trouble to get to know the work of the best practical breeders of his day. He attached great importance to this study of domesticated animals and plants, and considered it a most important source of his ideas on variability and inheritance.

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When the *Origin* appeared the idea of evolution was certainly in the air (although Darwin did not think so). Yet the first statement of the theory in 1858 evoked no public response. In this year papers by Wallace and Darwin were published simultaneously in the Journal of the Linnaean Society. Perhaps because of the method of publication little interest was aroused except among scientists. However, the storm broke in 1859 when the publication of the *Origin of Species* in book form was greeted with a veritable howl of abuse by those who saw in it, quite correctly, an attack on Christian dogma and orthodoxy, all the more dangerous and destructive because it was indirect and fundamental.

Evolution and Social Change

Writing twenty years later, when religion had perforce come to some kind of intellectual terms with evolution, T. H. Huxley, who sturdily defended Darwin from the start, found it difficult to explain the extraordinary violence of the onslaught. He suggested that, perhaps, the orthodox could be indifferent to the speculations of Lamarck or Erasmus Darwin, and to the milk-and-water titillations of Chambers' *Vestiges of Creation*, but that they were terrified of the *Origin of Species* because it was the work of a brilliant and acknowledged elder scientist of impeccable respectability who supported his case with facts and arguments which could not be seriously disputed. Undoubtedly there is much in this explanation, but probably there was a deeper historical reason. The period of the Hungry Forties and the Chartists had shown the British ruling class that it was facing something new—a class-conscious proletariat, imbued with ideas of social change, discontented and seriously thinking of revolt. Having staved off immediate dangers the bourgeoisie began that conscious and systematic humbugging of the working class which has been so marked and indispensable a feature of the establishment ever since. The Prince Consort made social speeches, and the monarchy, from being under the Georges the butt of savage ribaldry, was built up into a half-sacred symbol of class harmony. In this process established religion, regarded with cynical derision by the worldly politicians of the eighteenth century, was refurbished for its special role in blinding and stupefying the masses. The rise of the Oxford Movement, Tractarianism, Christian Socialism, and later the Salvation Army, are aspects of this process. Little wonder therefore that Darwinism was viciously attacked since it represented a potent force against these obscurantist tendencies.

The Materialist Outlook in Biology

When Darwin established in principle the laws by which higher organisms, including man himself, have arisen from lower organisms, he established once and for all the materialist outlook in biology. Living organisms are a part of nature, distinguished by their special complexity and laws of motion, but connected with and arising from the non-living. The extension of materialism to include the biological world represents the fundamental and revolutionary significance of Darwin's achievement—a qualitative leap forward in human understanding—only surpassed in its magnitude by the achievement of Marx and Engels in revealing the laws of movement of human society, the highest form of living matter.

The complete application of materialism in biology must include the question of how living systems arose in the first place from non-living matter. Naturally Darwin could not attempt to solve this problem with the knowledge of his time. Even today we can give no complete solution of this difficult question, but we can now give a plausible account of how life could have arisen from inorganic substances in the conditions known to have existed on the earth in early times. The materialist solution to this problem was first suggested by A. I. Oparin in 1924, and also independently by J. B. S. Haldane a little later. It is an indication of Darwin's consistent materialism that he was well aware of this problem, and that he believed that life would eventually be shown to have arisen from non-living matter. In one of his letters Darwin remarked that if we could imagine some primeval pond in which conditions were suitable for protein to be formed, then this compound would not, as at the present day, be devoured or absorbed by living creatures, but would be able to persist and undergo still more complex changes. This acute observation shows the profound and thoroughly materialist way in which he approached the problem of the origin of life.

It is very understandable that Darwin's extension of materialist scientific law to the realm of living organisms, including man, should awaken lively interest among the most progressive sections of contemporary thought, that is, in the most advanced and scientific sections of the Labour movement. There is evidence that this was so, and indeed at a later date it was frequently made a reproach to the supporters of Darwin, at least in Germany, that the theory was associated with socialism and atheism. The whole question of the influence of Darwinism in the Labour movement deserves more detailed treatment than it has received. Here I would only recall that Marx and Engels, the founders of the scientific theory of

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the movement of human society, immediately welcomed and understood the materialist essence and scientific significance of Darwin's work. From his notes in *Dialectics of Nature* it is clear that Engels intended to undertake a detailed analysis of Darwin's treatment of evolution. With remarkable acuity Engels pointed to certain weaknesses in Darwin arising from attempts to transfer some aspects of bourgeois social theories to biology. It is a surprising thing—an example of the accidental within the general determinism of scientific advance—that both Darwin and Wallace were enormously impressed by the naive over-population theories of Malthus, and Darwin even claimed that this was the source of his first idea of evolution by adaptation and selection. Yet in fact the basic idea of the *Origin of Species* is the selection (preferential survival) of organisms which become better adapted to their environment. "This principle of preservation, or the survival of the fittest, I have called Natural Selection. It leads to the improvement of each creature in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life; and consequently, in most cases, to what must be regarded as an advance in organisation." This basic conception—evolution by adaptation to the conditions of life—runs through the *Origin of Species* and the rest of Darwin's works. Examples of selection through over-population or struggle for existence within a species are not mentioned for the simple reason that they rarely, if ever, occur in natural conditions. Thus, as Engels first clearly pointed out, these naive ideas, crystallised in the uncritical use of the phrase "struggle for existence", form no real part of Darwinism and are only a source of misunderstanding and confusion. Attempts have at times been made to utilise Darwinism against socialism, and as a justification for the predatory class relations of capitalism and for war. These attempts to support incorrect social theories by misinterpreting biology have profited by a certain confusion in Darwin himself about these matters, an over-simple and mechanistic approach to social theories (in which he does not seem to have been much interested, perhaps because of the security of an independent income). But these ideas have no real impact on his biological theory, and in this connection he used the term "struggle for existence" for the most part legitimately as a vivid expression of some aspects of the adaptation of living organisms to their environment.

Darwinism Today

In the remainder of this essay I wish to discuss rather summarily some questions concerning the scientific position of Darwinism today. It is a tribute to Darwin's genius that his fundamental conception of the evolution of living things is now unchallenged. It is universally accepted that evolution proceeds by the selection, or preferential survival, of organisms showing inherited variations which cause them to be better adapted to their natural environment. Dispute, often sharp and sometimes conducted in a spirit very alien to the scrupulous objectivity of Darwin himself, has centred round the source of the hereditary variations on which selection acts. Are such variations induced by the environment, acting on the organism in the course of its development and causing systematic "adaptive" changes in it? Or do heritable variations only arise from mutations, that is, from sudden changes in the structures assumed to control the organism's heredity, changes which are accidental or spontaneous in the sense that they do not arise adaptively during development? To this question I shall return a little later, after discussing some points about the fundamental law of movement of living things, which may indicate a possible approach to a solution.

Modern theory has, at least until very recently, added surprisingly little to our knowledge of the actual process of evolution. The rise of genetics has provided a wealth of facts about the methods of inheritance of variation but without affecting or seriously adding to Darwin's statement of evolution. It has shown that large abrupt variations can occur and be inherited, which Darwin certainly knew quite well, and it has also shown that many variations are transmitted hereditarily without blending, a fact which was not so clear in Darwin's time. On the whole genetics has contributed less than might be expected to the understanding of evolutionary change. One reason for this is undoubtedly the great difficulty of investigation of so complex a phenomenon. Another reason is the relatively small scale of biological research in capitalist societies, where such resources as are made available for scientific research go largely to the physical sciences. I believe, however, that some part in retarding development of evolutionary theory has also been played by certain mechanistic conceptions, at one time dominant in genetics, according to which heredity resided solely in a specialised part of the organism which controlled the development of the organism but was itself unaffected by the environment (except by mutation). In recent years this conception was criticised by a number of biologists but most fundamentally by the Michurinist school in the Soviet Union. There is no need to dwell on this question today. It appears to be widely, if tacitly, admitted that the basic criticisms of the

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Michurinists were correct, although many would consider that their case would have been more powerful if less dogmatically stated. The weight of Michurinist criticism, together with much fresh experimental evidence, not only from the Soviet Union but from laboratories throughout the world, has led to a considerable change in conceptions of the nature of heredity. Although there is no unity of theory, and mechanistic ideas widely persist, yet there is among most biologists a less rigid attitude and a widespread recognition of the need for a critical and materialist approach.

Organism and Environment

At this point I should like to consider the relation between living organism and its environment, a question of immediate relevance to the subject of the foregoing paragraph and to the outlook of Darwin. The essential feature of "classical" genetics was that the development of an organism is controlled by a special persistent material part of it (the genome, or the gene-complex) which is removed from or, as is often said, buffered from environmental influence. Now this conception implies a purely mechanical relation between the organism and its environment, in which development of the organism is autogenetic and the environment has significance only as a permissive background. The incorrectness of treating the organism-environment relation in this way was clearly recognised by the Michurinist school as the key question, and many thoughtful biologists have shown appreciation of this point. In a recent book, *The Strategy of the Genes*, Professor C. H. Waddington has written a series of essays on development and evolution, in which he puts the point of view of an acute thinker who has moved a long way from what were orthodox genetical conceptions. He is repeatedly critical of biologists who underestimate the importance of environment and speaks of the theoretical dangers of a "debasement of the role of the environment". Nevertheless it appears to me that Waddington does not actually advance beyond a mechanical view of the environment, whereas a real understanding of the development of living organisms (including their heredity) can only proceed from the dialectical relation between organism and environment.

This dialectical relation between organism and environment is fundamental, for, as Engels first pointed out, it is this which defines the specific character of living systems, and forms their characteristic law of movement, distinguishing them from other forms of matter in motion. The relation between organism and environment is one of interpenetration, of constant interaction between them. Development (ontogeny) occurs as a result of this interaction, and thus the "normal environment" enters as an essential moving force at every stage. This analysis of organic development was brilliantly stated in outline by Lysenko. At each stage an organism has specific requirements from the environment, that is, enters into specific relations with it. The assimilation of these requirements changes the organism, creates new specific requirements, new interactions with the environment. Such a dialectical relation between organism and environment (including the internal environment) is the real basis of living systems and is, I believe, the key to an understanding of development and morphogenesis, the central problem of biology. Of course, the mere statement of a general principle is only the beginning, although this in itself is useful. Thus Waddington in the book mentioned above is much concerned with the fact of the relative stability of developmental paths in organisms (which he refers to as "canalisation"). Such stability can best be understood as arising from the ceaseless dynamic interaction of organism and environment. The real value of this view of organism and environment is that it provides the conceptual framework for the concrete experimental investigation of the development of living systems in the precise terms of metabolic and biochemical processes. This complex and difficult task will require the co-operation of many branches of science and the use of the most advanced techniques, but it will be greatly aided by correct understanding of the dialectical unity of organism and environment.

This approach would represent a logical continuation and deepening of Darwin's own thought. He regarded the environment as the general cause of development and evolutionary change, and had the clearest conception of the link between individual development and hereditary change, as exemplified by many quotations of fact, and by the importance he attached to the study of embryology, rudimentary organs, and developmental stages. It is interesting in this connection to consider for a moment Darwin's theory of Pangenesis.

This theory, in which he tried to give a general explanation of all the facts of development and heredity, can hardly be treated very seriously. Briefly, he supposed that every cell of an organism produces minute bodies known as gemmules which pass into other cells throughout the living body and especially into the reproductive cells. In the next generation gemmules unite with developing cells corresponding to those from which they came, and thus take part in and influence the development of the new organism. The interest

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of this bizarre theory is its evidence, despite its extremely idealistic form, of Darwin's search for a materialist theory of development and heredity, and his keen perception of the main requirements. In the first place, the attempt to found a general theory was remarkable for its boldness. No approach to a general theory is possible today, although the analysis of organism-environment indicates the direction in which advance may be made. Secondly, the mysterious gemmules foreshadow a material system of metabolic interactions which physiology and biochemistry now show to exist. Thirdly, the theory contains the conception that the heredity of an organism is actively built up during the life-cycle, an aspect of development often ignored but which is likely to stimulate interesting experimental work in the future.

The Source of Variation

I referred above to the division of opinion concerning the source of the variation of living organisms upon which natural selection acts. Darwin did not claim to give a final or even a very definite answer, but consistently with his general outlook he considered the environment to be the source of heritable variation, acting on organisms in various ways, direct and indirect, and being also the cause of apparently spontaneous changes. With the rise of Mendelian genetics during the present century the view came to be widely held that heritable variation arose only from sudden, often spontaneous, changes or mutations in the genome. It is not denied that mutations are caused by environmental influences. Ionising radiations, chemical substances, and other factors increase enormously the number of mutations, and the type of mutation resulting can often be correlated to some extent with the nature of the exciting agent. Spontaneous mutants may be ascribed to similar but unidentified causes. Mutations do not, however, arise in the course of development of the organism as adaptive changes, and from this point of view are random, chance events. Now the occurrence of heritable mutations, in all types of living organism, whether induced (by radiation or other cause) or spontaneous, is not questioned by anyone, and if a mutation is of benefit to the organism it is likely to be preserved by natural selection.

It seems certain, therefore, that "spontaneous" mutations have played a role in the evolution of living things, but the importance of this role is not known. Some years ago I drew attention to what I consider to be the significant aspect of mutation, namely, that every mutation is the expression of some concrete physiological possibility of the organism in relation to its conditions of life, and in this indirect sense is adaptive. Thus the positive feature of mutation lies in its relation to the actual metabolic potentialities of the organism, not in its accidental character.

The possibility that an organism could inherit changes adaptively acquired during development under the influence of the environment (known for short as "the inheritance of acquired characters") was certainly assumed by Darwin but has been hotly denied by many biologists. In the last few years, however, a considerable revision of opinion has taken place, as experimental facts have accumulated showing that in certain circumstances acquired characters can be inherited. The evidence first provided by the Michurinist school in the Soviet Union has been reinforced by work in other countries. Higher animals and plants may show hereditary changes not only as a result of blood transfusion, grafting, but following changes in cultural conditions (temperature, food etc.). With micro-organisms it has in some cases been shown that hereditary changes are directly induced by environmental factors. Thus prolonged culture of a bacterium for numerous generations in presence of a toxic substance induces systematic metabolic changes which finally make the bacterium highly resistant to the substance in question. Sometimes the acquired resistance is slowly lost again when the organism is returned to the original environment, but often the new character persists without reversion, especially if cultivation of the organism in presence of the toxic substance has been prolonged, so that other correlated metabolic changes have occurred which make reversion impossible. With higher animals and plants it seems very probable that there is also direct adaptive response to environmental influence, but this has not been shown so rigorously as in the case of micro-organisms, and some biologists ascribe the results to what is termed "genetic assimilation", that is, to spontaneous mutations which happen to "copy" the environment-induced change and are therefore selected in the given environment. It is hard to see why "genetic assimilation" should be thought more probable than direct response to the environment. However, this question can be left to be settled by experiment. In some cases at least the inheritance of new characters acquired by adaptive response to the environment can now be taken as established.

In some other experiments in which organisms acquire resistance to toxic substances by progressive change over a number of generations it has been shown equally rigorously that the change is not induced adaptively by the substance to which resistance is acquired. Indeed experiments

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can be carried out in such a way that resistance is progressively acquired to a substance with which the organisms actually used for breeding never come in contact. The existence of this type of behaviour is particularly interesting and indicates that the distinction between the two extreme types of hereditary change, by mutation or by adaptive response to the environment, is not so absolute as has been assumed. The common feature is that every organism has certain concrete possibilities of metabolic variation, a range of adaptive capacity, on which selection can act to cause inherited evolutionary change. This adaptive variability is not a mysterious innate property; it derives directly from the dialectical interaction of the organism and its environment which is the driving force of development. Thus the interplay of organism and environment in metabolism is the underlying realism which unites the different types of evolutionary change in one general movement, the laws of which Darwin so brilliantly perceived.

Creative generalisation and unification of apparently diverse phenomena are the revolutionary strength of Darwin's work and the sign of his materialist outlook. For this reason, many other aspects of his work, which I have not mentioned in this short essay, are still of vital interest today. The future of biology is along the path which Darwin took—rigorous experimentation, and bold yet critical theorising, enriched now by the conscious use of dialectical method, and safeguarded by scientific humility.

TOM PAINE

The 8th of June this year will be the 150th anniversary of the death of Thomas Paine, the famous English philosopher and revolutionary. To mark the occasion, an exhibition, open to the public, will be on view at the Marx Memorial Library from May 30th to June 13th.

The exhibition will include, besides early editions of the writings of Paine and his contemporaries, a wealth of illustrative material—portraits, cartoons, scenes of the events of the period, medallions struck in honour of Tom Paine, etc. Numerous rare exhibits are being loaned from the collection of the late Mr. Adrian Brunel, who made many years' study of the life of Paine, and from those of other collectors.

The Marx Memorial Library is at Marx House, 37a Clerkenwell Green, E.C.1, and is open from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesdays to Fridays and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays.

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The Artist and Politics

Arnold Kettle

[What follows are some somewhat random thoughts on an important but difficult subject. They are not intended to be in any sense definitive. Contributions to discussion will be welcome—A. K.].

THE question of art or culture and its relation to politics is a very real and immediate political question. It has recently cropped up in a particularly dramatic and inescapable form with the question of Pasternak and *Doctor Zhivago*. It was the major theoretical preoccupation of the two most distinguished modern German literary intellectuals, Thomas Mann and Bertolt Brecht. It has been the subject of intense discussion in France, especially since the war and occupation, as illustrated for instance in Simone de Beauvoir's novel *The Mandarins*. And it has recently, again, in Britain been the subject of a notable book by John Berger, the novel *A Painter of our Time*.

Art and Society

I think it is particularly important not to treat the question of the relation of the artist to society in an abstract way. Society is not itself an abstraction and if we generalise about society as such we do so at our peril. Because man is a social being and cannot live and develop without other men he is bound, always, to enter into relationships with other men, to live in a society. But the relationships that bind men together have been, and are, of many kinds. What all societies have in common is not more important than what differentiates one society from another. The question of the relation of the artist to society has got to be seen as part of a larger question: the way men's social relationships, in all their complexity, change and develop.

The word artist changes its meaning and significance like everything else. The position of the artist in modern British bourgeois society is very different from that of the artist 400 or even 2,000 years ago. Yet bourgeois artists and critics, and some who would be insulted to have the adjective bourgeois applied to them, nearly always talk as though their own highly individualist, historically-speaking very exceptional, view of the artist were hallowed by centuries of experience and general agreement. This is partly due to an instinct for self-protection. Probably no society has ever been quite so inimical to humane culture as modern industrial capitalism which turns everything into a commodity and whose typical representatives have for the most part not even bothered to conceal their contempt for and impatience with art. Mr. Podsnap's view, which Dickens so brilliantly expressed in *Our Mutual Friend,* really is what at bottom the bourgeoisie feels about art.

> "Mr. Podsnap's world was not a very large world, morally; no, nor even geographically... The world got up at eight, shaved close at a quarter-past, breakfasted at nine, went to the City at ten, came home at half-past five, and dined at seven. Mr. Podsnap's notions of the Arts in their integrity might have been stated thus. Literature: large print, respectively descriptive of getting up at eight, shaving close at quarter-past, breakfasting at nine, going to the City at ten, coming home at half-past five, and dining at seven. Painting and Sculpture; models and portraits of Professors of getting up at eight, shaving close at quarter-past, breakfasting at nine, going to the City at ten, coming home at half-past five, and dining at seven. Music: a respectable performance (without variations) on stringed and wind instruments, sedately expressive of getting up at eight etc. . . . Nothing else to be permitted to those same vagrants the Arts, on pain of excommunication."

It is not hard to see why so many sensitive nineteenth-century artists, loathing Podsnappery and rejected by it, became rebels, passionately dissociating themselves from the values and morality of Victorian capitalism, becoming, in the eyes of the rulers of that society, "anti-social". Nor is it hard to see why their rebellion should, typically, have taken a largely individualist and anarchistic character. It was not easy for the nineteenth-century artist, himself almost inevitably of bourgeois or petty bourgeois background, to associate himself in his rebellion with the still relatively weak working class movement. Some of the deepest spirits did, of course, in different ways and with varying degrees of success, manage to make this transition: one has only to mention Dickens, Ruskin, William Morris, Bernard Shaw. But the far more common pilgrimage was towards either an ivory tower—what Tennyson so aptly called the Palace of Art—or a more sordid Bohemia

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from which one thumbed one's nose at all "respectability". And it is probably true to say that these two tendencies were even stronger among painters and musicians than among writers. It is interesting that when the typical late nineteenth-century artist (Flaubert is a good example) attacks "bourgeois" ideas what he principally has in mind is not capitalism as an economic and social system but the smug and narrow complacency of the petty bourgeoisie. Respectability rather than exploitation is what most angers him.

The Artist in Bourgeois Society

One can only mention a few of the by-products of this situation. One, of course, has been the very widespread tendency of the artist, in the last hundred and fifty years or so, to see himself as a lone figure, supported no doubt by other like- and high-minded individuals, fighting a desperate battle to preserve his integrity against the alien and corrupting forces around him—forces which he easily comes to identify with "society" as such. In such a situation to be "anti-social" quickly comes to be seen as a positive virtue. The permanent alienation of the artist from society comes to be seen as a feature, not of capitalism, but of life. So that a *Manchester Guardian* reviewer can let fall without fear of contradiction the sentence:

> "The artist or the intellectual is in a relationship with the rest of society which can only be expressed in terms of 'I' and 'they'." (*Manchester Guardian*, 7.10.58).

Socially-acceptable art becomes, in such a context, associated with those who have sold their souls, compromised with the philistines, entered the Royal Academy. And the working class comes to be seen less as an *alternative* to the bourgeoisie, a hope for the future, than as a more or less inarticulate slab of humanity itself largely corrupted by the set-up—call it industrialism, capitalism, what you will. For though the typical petty-bourgeois artist in capitalist society feels far more sympathy for the workers than for the bourgeoisie and will tell you—especially after a few pints—how much humanity and decency and fellow-feeling he has found among working class people, yet he also feels, vis-à-vis the working class, extremely *unappreciated*. He knows from experience that the average worker doesn't like his painting or his sonata any more than the philistine millionaire. And so, unless he is rather exceptional, he turns more and more to the company and to the values of other people like himself, other artists and literary* intellectuals, people who care about art and things of the mind, people who understand him. The "classless" world of the intelligentsia absorbs him, not completely, since by its nature it is not a complete world, but with a powerful and often a seductive force.

Equally important is the particular connection that the word Art has acquired in this situation. It is, in the sense it is now commonly used, a comparatively new word,† and it makes remarkable claims for itself. The artist is seen not primarily in terms of contributing to the life and knowledge of the community but in terms of some almost mystical act of "self-expression" or in direct relation to some absolute abstraction like Truth or Beauty. It is necessary to try not to oversimplify these tendencies. Marxists sometimes talk as though most contemporary bourgeois artists and critics consciously subscribe to the late nineteenth-century theory of "art for art's sake." In fact nowadays very few artists *consciously* sympathise with this position and become very indignant if you suggest to them that they do. Nevertheless, even though they may not realise it, most contemporary artists do in practice take up a position which is in essence not very far from "art for art's sake", for by insisting that art has little or no *direct* social effects (they will generally admit it has indirect or "long term" ones) they do in actuality remove it out of the sphere of social activity and judgment.

The word Art has, in the last 200 years or so, acquired a remarkable aura of something like divinity. For a great many intellectuals it has in fact replaced religion as the idea to which is given the highest of all sanctions. The artist is seen, if not precisely as a god, as the nearest approach to god that twentieth-century intellectual scepticism will permit. The artist is the man who, above all others, perceives and expresses the truth about the world we live in. He teaches us to see what had previously escaped our observation, he defines what had previously escaped full comprehension. He is at once "committed" (for life in all its ramifications is his province) and disinterested, above partisan considerations because uncorrupted by political power.

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* I use the world "literary" to distinguish them from the scientists. There is relatively little contact in our society between the scientific and literary intelligentsia: even in a university, where Arts and Sciences are studied within the same institution, this is true.

† Raymond Williams, in his *Culture and Society* 1780-1950, a non-Marxist work of great interest, has some relevant material on this subject.

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It is necessary for us—especially if we do not normally mix in circles in which these things are much discussed—to appreciate the force with which these convictions about the supremacy of art are held. Otherwise we shall not understand what is behind many of the reactions which take place among people interested in the arts. I think it is not easy, for instance, for most workers to understand how passionately intellectuals can feel about such an issue as the publication of Pasternak's *Zhivago* or whether or not such-and-such a film should be censored. No doubt there is very often a great deal in such reactions which is in fact unbalanced, hypocritical and indefensible; but we shall only tackle such problems effectively if we recognise—to put it crudely—what we are up against.

Commitment and Liberalism

The very people who talk most about "commitment" and the duties of the artist to humanity are very often among those most deeply imbued with a liberal individualist view of the position of the artist. In *Declaration,* that rather dim symposium of the more or less Angry, one comes for instance upon a passage by Doris Lessing in an essay which is in many ways sympathetic and progressive in tone and intention:

> "I think that a writer who has for many years been emotionally involved in the basic ethical conflict of communism—what is due to the collective and what to the individual conscience—is peculiarly equipped to write of the dangers inherent in being "committed". The writer who can be bludgeoned into silence by fear of economic pressure is not worth considering; these problems are simple and the dangers easily recognisable. What is dangerous is the inner loyalty to something felt as something much greater than one's self. I remember, in Moscow, when this question was discussed, a writer replied to an accusation of being bludgeoned by the Party into false writing by saying: 'No one bludgeons us. Our conscience is at the service of the people. We develop an inner censor.' It is the inner censor which is the enemy."

It is worth examining some of the implications here. In the first place Doris Lessing is right when she says that commitment has its danger. Of course it has. Everything has—especially what is important. The danger of the writer becoming a yes-man is a real one. But the way Doris Lessing poses the question seems to me wrong, especially when she poses the individual conscience *against* the collective. For one thing we have to recognise that "conscience" is itself a weighted word. If we use the word "judgment" the whole problem immediately looks a little different—and, I think, clearer. I remember a colleague coming to me in great distress at the time of the Hungarian crisis and saying that his conscience would no longer allow him to be a member of the Communist Party. I was distressed, too, and said with equal emotion that my conscience would not allow me to leave the Communist Party. After that it was surprising how much better we both felt for we both realised that what was at stake was not conscience versus lack of conscience but one man's conscience versus another's—in other words a difference of *judgment.* And having established this we were able to discuss the real problems about Hungary, whether certain decisions taken were—all things considered—the right ones or not. And I think the same sort of process needs applying to Doris Lessing's remark:

> *"It is the inner censor which is the enemy."*—[my italics]

Is it really? Should the writer, alone among human beings, really render himself immune to that inner censor which prevents us at certain times saying or doing things which we feel—all things considered—will be unhelpful—and this in the sacred name of conscience! Should the writer really be committed to the view that he should *always* say what first comes into his head or that he should always say what he has a particularly strong impulse to say, *regardless of the consequences*? I think this is an untenable position and that to pretend that it is the answer to the difficult problem of whether or not an individual should submit his personal judgment to the collective judgment is quite unsatisfactory. So is the use by Doris Lessing a little later of the word expediency. Another weighted word. Of course if you organise a battle between conscience and expediency everyone knows from the start which ought to win. Yet expediency, minus its pejorative associations, means doing what seems, all things considered, to be right, making what seems to be the best, most helpful decision. I cannot see any other basis for making decisions—moral, political, artistic, public, private, long-term, short-term or what have you. And I think it is nonsense for artists to claim that they can have any other tenable basis for taking their decisions.

Not that one would suggest for a moment that there are not enormous difficulties involved, innumerable possibilities of error. What has to be insisted is that the only valid basis of judgment is whether any particular book or film or action will or will not serve humanity, not humanity in the abstract but human beings in the actual situation in which they find themselves. It is no good for artists to claim exemption from this general criterion, to claim, for instance, the right to

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say at all times exactly what they feel like (which isn't the same, incidentally, as suggesting they ought to say what they don't feel). There are times when it is better not to say certain things even when they are true. I am quite sure a novelist living in Notting Hill could write a perfectly truthful novel—in the sense that chapter and verse could be given for all the facts mentioned—in which most of the West Indian and African characters turned out to be knife-carriers, drug-pedlars and ponces. And if someone complained that this was not the whole truth he would reply quite justly that he never said it was the whole truth and anyway no novel can ever tell the whole truth. Yet I believe that an author who tried to publish such a novel would be not merely irresponsible, but guilty within his particular sphere of crimes against humanity.

Art is Important

There is, however, a real danger that we may seriously underestimate the whole importance and supreme value of art. Art *is* one of the essential ways of discovering what men and their world are really like and, not least, what their potentialities are. Art is tremendously important and valuable precisely because it is not what culture-snobs think it is, a pleasant and elegant trimming to our lives, the icing on the cake. It increases not simply our enjoyment of life (though it does that) but our knowledge and understanding releases new energy in us, helps us to change the world. As George Thomson has put it: "The artist leads his fellow men into the world of fantasy, where they find release, thus asserting the refusal of the human consciousness to acquiesce in its environment, and by this means there is collected a hidden store of energy which flows back into the real world and transforms fantasy into fact."

It is right to emphasise that the relation of the artist to *any* society is likely not to be an altogether simple one. This is due to a number of complexities in the situation, but I would mention only two of them.

Fantasy and Reality

(i) There is no doubt that the history of class society in general and of capitalism in particular has led us to over-emphasise the singularity, oddity, individualism of the artist. In particular it has stressed the quality of intensity and individual creative struggle involved in the production of good art. In a society based on human co-operation I feel sure that attitudes to art will be more relaxed and rational, less centred on titanic personal grapplings. Yet, even so, there is a certain paradox involved in artistic creation which even in the most rational society will, I think, still have to be recognised. I mean the fact that the artist does, in an important sense, withdraw from life in order to master and participate in it. The painter alone with his canvas, the writer wrestling with the words that are his medium, the film director shooting time and time again a particular scene to get it "right": each of them is involved in a process which has its own logic and its own contradictions—not of course separate from or in contradiction to the processes and needs of life but nevertheless, because it involves absorption in fantasy, raising its own peculiar and complex problems. It is true, of course, that this applies to some extent to any skill or craft. The precision engineer working on a new apparatus withdraws, in a sense, into a field of activity, a world which has its own laws and, in the old-fashioned, craft sense, "mysteries". And, like the composer, he mustn't be disturbed, as his wife has long ago discovered. Yet there is a difference between the contradiction involved in precision engineering and the concentration involved in composing a symphony and the difference is that the artist is involved in what is best called fantasy. He creates a world which he and everyone else knows is not the real world. No one supposes that Paul Robeson is *really* Othello. And this is a problem with which the engineer is not concerned; there is no element of fantasy in what he is doing, though there is, let us not forget, the quality we commonly call "imagination", which I take to be the creative element involved in scientific research, and is the expression of man's power to project the experiences of the past into the future, the power of the architect to envisage a building which has not yet come into existence but will.

I do not think the creation of fantasy is quite so different from scientific activity as is generally assumed. For the fantasy world of art is, of course, in some sense or other, however complex, a reflection of the real world, just as the architect's plans are. But the complexities involved are very considerable and they arise largely because the artist, as opposed to the architect or the engineer, has as his raw materials human beings and their relationships. And the complexities are so great that they create what is in effect a new problem.

In practice the new problem can be seen in the difficulties which arise when a society tries to help its artists develop their art. In bourgeois society this question by and large simply does not arise. Since, through the very nature of class society, you cannot have social planning in the

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people's interests, the only kind of culture that gets official encouragement is the kind that bolsters up class privilege and class thinking. For the rest, the artists either have to come to terms with the moneybags or else work out their own salvation as best they can. The honest culture is the culture produced *against* the grain of the Establishment, with the help, acknowledged or not, of the progressive movements of the people against the bourgeois state. But when, as in the Soviet Union or other socialist countries, a society arises which takes a responsible attitude towards culture (i.e. sees it as its job to encourage the good and discourage the bad) and attempts to help its artists to develop in a way which will serve and enrich the people as a whole, then certain new problems crop up, especially at first.

Problems of Soviet Culture

Soviet culture today is an infinitely healthier, infinitely richer—because more popular—culture than the culture of the capitalist world. Yet the difficulties the Soviet leadership have had in persuading Soviet artists to produce new works really commensurate with the all-round human advances of socialist society are no secret. No doubt the abuses of the Stalin period and their considerable and often disastrous effects on many areas of Soviet intellectual life made the difficulties far greater. Yet I think we would be wrong to see the problem as primarily one created by these abuses. Even without the bad things of the Stalin period the business of transforming bourgeois attitudes towards culture into socialist ones would have been difficult enough and one of the dangers of blaming all the weaknesses of Soviet culture on to the Stalin period is that—as our revisionists demonstrate—this can so easily lead to a sheer crude liberalism which is utterly inadequate to meet the issues concerned.

The principal difficulties, in my opinion, which have been met in the Soviet Union on this front are (*a*) that old individualist attitudes to art among intellectuals die hard and are not easily buried, and (*b*) that it is not easy to evolve ways of giving necessary help and guidance to artists without at the same time inhibiting initiative.

(*a*) The problem of getting rid of bourgeois ideas among Soviet intellectuals has undoubtedly been hampered by the necessary but dangerous policy of giving intellectuals and cultural workers rather exceptional privileges. This was inevitable. The Soviet people, emerging from oppression and illiteracy, demanded books and films, music and ballet on a scale hitherto undreamed of, and the writers and ballerinas undoubtedly became privileged members of Soviet society, often living lives which cut them off to some extent from Soviet reality. But whereas the whole activity of ballet-dancing requires corporate effort and "team-spirit", which no doubt counteract to a considerable extent other tendencies, the activity of writing a novel or painting a picture tends to have the opposite effect. It is easy enough to elevate the inevitable isolation of the writer in the throes of creation into some kind of mystic "apartness".

In addition to this, intellectuals, through their whole way of life, tend to be most subject to cosmopolitan attitudes and influences, to cling most nostalgically to a past in which a cultural élite of every country felt more in common with its prototypes in other lands than with the workers of its own country. This attitude, for instance, wends its way through Pasternak's *Zhivago* as unmistakably as it does through Dostoievsky's *Possessed*, even though both writers, obviously with sincerity, make much of their "Russianness".

(*b*) It doesn't do very much good simply to tell writers what they ought to write. Art, of all activities, needs the most complete absorption, the most utter conviction. Even if you manage to persuade an abstract painter intellectually that he ought to paint representational pictures the chances are that for a long while his representational pictures won't be much good. Art is a great revealer, it will reveal more surely than anything else the weaknesses of a man's philosophy, the hollowness of his pretensions and the limitations of his good intentions. So that the business of giving guidance to artists isn't simple, quite apart from the fact that most of them will resent it like the plague.

Does this mean that guidance shouldn't be given, that the Party should leave such matters to chance or history? Obviously it doesn't. As Comrade Gomulka points out in the last number of *Marxism Today*, "The cultural revolution is an indispensable element of a socialist revolution". A Communist Party cannot possibly remain indifferent or neutral in ideological or cultural matters. Every parent discovers that some of the forms of pressure or influence he exerts on his children are ineffective if not worse; but it is a very foolish parent who then jumps to the conclusion that he should therefore exert no pressure or influence at all. It doesn't do much good simply to tell writers what they ought to write; but that doesn't mean that the pressures of a society should not be consciously exerted to try to convince artists that they should be responsible rather than irresponsible, that they are subject to the same obligations and duties as everyone else

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—and indeed more so, because their very articulateness imposes an extra obligation.

Why "Zhivago" was not Published

The liberal principle of cultural *laisser-faire* has no place in a Marxist outlook. I think this is not always sufficiently realised. There is a tendency among Left intellectuals who are not at all to be classed as anti-Soviet to imagine, for instance, that the Soviet decision not to publish *Zhivago* is a sort of temporary aberration from liberal principles due almost entirely to the immediate exigencies of the cold war. I think this is self-deception and that the editors of *Novy Mir* meant what they said when they wrote to Pasternak:

> "It seems to us that your novel is profoundly unjust and historically prejudiced in its description of the revolution, the civil war and the years after the revolution, that it is profoundly anti-democratic and that any conception of the interests of the people is alien to it. All this, taken as a whole, stems from your standpoint as a man who tries in his novel to prove that, far from having had any positive significance in the history of our people and mankind the October Socialist Revolution brought nothing but evil and hardships. As people whose standpoint is diametrically opposed to yours, we naturally believe that it is out of the question to publish your novel in the columns of the magazine *Novy Mir*."

Now whether or not the editors of *Novy Mir* were right in their estimate of the novel is a quite separate question. What I think is clear is that the decision not to publish *Zhivago* was due neither to an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the capitalist world making use of the book nor to a groundless fear that it would corrupt large numbers of Soviet readers, but rather to the general principle that a socialist society feels no obligation to publish work that is fundamentally opposed to and has the effect of misrepresenting the human advances and ideals of the socialist revolution. Obviously such a principle is not one that will be found sympathetic by those who do not see the ending of exploitation as a basic human advance or a socialist society as a higher form of society than its predecessors; but to the millions who have actually emerged from class oppression into socialism it seems merely common sense. To them it is the idea that the stronger and more secure a socialist society becomes the more ready it should be to publish anti-socialist literature that is hard to comprehend.

Creating a Popular Culture

(ii) A second real problem which has to be recognised in the creation of a satisfactory popular art is that such things take a good deal of time. As John Berger's painter hero says in *A Painter of Our Time*:

> "The artist's justification lies in creating new relevances; but it takes a long time. To create a heavy industry in five or ten years is an heroic but possible aim. To create a heavyweight art in the same time is impossible."

Just because the production of art is the kind of process it is, we should not be surprised that the establishment of a new tradition in art takes a long time. The business of absorbing experiences and ideas at the level necessary to turn them into mature and worthy art-products is immensely hard. That is the reason why there has been, for instance, so little adequate literature about the two world wars. It is not that artists have not felt strongly or held very definite opinions about these wars; the problem is to find ways of organising and expressing these feelings and opinions in art. The creation of a new tradition in which the artist can work easily and confidently is something very tricky. It is not by chance that writers have nearly always written about the past, even if it is the fairly immediate past. Scarcely one of Shakespeare's plays is set in Elizabethan England. Even Dickens (an unusually topical writer) set his early novels twenty or thirty years back in history, like *Pickwick*, presumably because he felt that this was what he had most fully absorbed. Many artists continue to write about the world of their childhood and early manhood all their lives—and this isn't necessarily escapism, though of course it can be. Some critics have expressed astonishment that Pasternak could have lived through forty years of the Soviet revolution and yet remain so intractably bourgeois in his outlook. But Pasternak was twenty-seven in 1917 and the surprising thing, to anyone familiar with the development of artists, would have been if he had much changed. I am not suggesting, of course, that artists, alone of living creatures, are not subject to the laws of change. But I think it should be recognised that the kind of absorption and comprehension of material involved in the production of art is not something that can well be rushed. To write a novel or paint a picture unless you feel the experiences involved upon your pulses and are absolutely in control of your material is to court superficiality and triviality.

But of course this kind of argument applies to other people as well as artists. It is all very well for a painter to write, "To create a heavy industry in five or ten years is an heroic but possible aim" but does he quite realise all the implications here of the word heroic? It involves—if one thinks of, say, Soviet industrialisation in the

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thirties or the Chinese efforts of the last two years or for that matter of the British war effort—not merely tremendously hard work and sacrifice in the more obvious senses, it also means to the individual craftsman a certain sacrifice of his perfectionist standards and to the research scientist a deliberate concentration on immediate and perhaps rather humdrum needs when he would no doubt sooner be working among the broader vistas of longer-term investigation. It is notable that every great heroic industrial advance of our time has been made *against* the views of the relevant "experts", whose conceptions of the possible are significantly limited by their very expertness. It takes the mass of the people, politically mobilised, to produce new standards in possibility, new heroes of our time. Is there any real reason why the artist should not be asked to make similar sacrifices, to become a similar sort of hero? Is not the tendency of the artist to claim the sort of special privilege that he does chiefly a reflection of his tendency—historically explicable but no longer justifiable—to see himself as in some way above the struggle, above humanity and its actual needs?

It seems to me that centuries of individualist thinking and practice have led us all (including no doubt myself) to exaggerate the purely personal nature of artistic creation. The art of primitive, pre-class societies is communal and anonymous; I have no doubt that future art will tend to be so again, though obviously on a far higher level of consciousness and complexity.

How Different is the Artist?

"I think that we ought to destroy the whole thing that the artist is different from anyone else."

A recent remark of Christopher Logue's seems to me true and healthy and apt. Of course, in one sense, an artist is different: he is an artist. But there are two kinds of different artists. One sees himself as having a special *sort* of sensibility, some special *sort* of direct contact with truth and reality, which makes him superior to and in that sense different from other people. This is the basis of snob art, *élite* culture, intellectual arrogance. The second artist sees himself as different from other people only in the sense of being better able to express what all feel. This is the basis of a responsible and democratic attitude to art.

Anti-Soviet Ideology in Retreat

Pat Sloan

THE paid ideologists of capitalism are faced by two main snags in persuading the world of the superiority of capitalism over socialism. First, "the bourgeoisie is ever at odds". Even during the armed intervention there were businessmen who openly advocated peaceful trade as an alternative to war, and from 1941 to 1945 the world's capitalist class was split wide open, half of it in alliance with the U.S.S.R. It is therefore not surprising that even in the anti-Soviet columns of the press, we find the "experts" refuting one another.

The second snag is simply—hard facts. In 1922 Churchill was able, on the basis of a famine resulting from his own and others' criminal intervention, to denounce communism as that "unnatural system which paralyses human effort and dries up the springs of enterprise and wealth". But you cannot go on doing that forever, especially in 1959 when a subsequent Conservative Premier has just told the Russians: "The pace and quality of your progress are indeed astounding and, as far as I know, have no parallel in history." And during the Finnish War the press played whoopee with stories of Soviet planes tied together with string, but that could never happen again with the same conviction after Churchill had recognised that it was the Soviet armies that had "torn the guts out of the Nazi armies".

And so, one by one, trump cards of the capitalist ideologists—such as Soviet inefficiency or military weakness—are torn from their hands as fact after fact, sputnik after sputnik, force recognition.

History helped the anti-Soviet ideologists for very many years, for the Revolution occurred in a very backward country, devastated by wars. This made it possible (and still does to some extent) for enemies to present all the primitive survivals of Tsarism as the products of Socialism, an old dodge which—apart from the pure lies—has pro-

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vided the content of practically all anti-Soviet propaganda for forty-two years. But today, as the U.S.S.R. enters upon its last lap in the great contest to overtake and surpass the most advanced capitalist country in production per head, and even American economists no longer doubt that it will happen, and at the same time there is a new blossoming of Soviet democracy, the anti-Soviet ideologists find it harder to keep up the struggle.

In this article I propose to examine as examples the writings over the past six months of two well-known "experts" who, taken together, are a source of Soviet "information" for a substantial part of the British intelligentsia. I refer to Edward Crankshaw of *The Observer* and Victor Zorza of the *Manchester Guardian*. Like the bourgeoisie, they are "at odds".

The Seven-Year Plan

How, first of all, do these "experts" react to the Seven-Year Plan?

As with most matters of moment, Zorza says as little as possible, but what he does say is self contradictory. He maintains that Khrushchov's "preoccupation with developing the Soviet economy may be no less risky than a policy of external warmongering, for it would create stresses and tensions inside Russia which would endanger the stability of that country and with it the peace of the world". This is typical Zorza—even a plan of peaceful construction has to be condemned . . . as endangering world peace! But Zorza's arithmetic is haywire anyway, for the 80 per cent increase in production in seven years is a *lower* percentage increase than in the last few years, so much so that another anti-Soviet ideologist, the economist G. A. Nove, recently wrote to *The Times* to allege—not Zorza's "breakneck progress which could create dangerous tensions" but a *slowing down* in the Soviet rate of development!

While the ideologists fight each other it should be noted that there is in fact to be a fall in annual *percentage* increase in production from about 10 per cent to 8.6 per cent, but the *actual* increase in production (at stable prices) is to go up from 94.6 thousand million roubles a year in 1959 to 163.4 thousand million roubles in 1965. This can hardly be called "slowing down", but it equally, compared with recent years, is not a "breakneck" speed.

Crankshaw, fresh from a visit to the U.S.S.R., accepts the facts: "There has been astonishingly swift progress on the material level during the two years of Khrushchov's ascendancy," he writes. He was struck by what he calls Western efficiency "while retaining Russian warmth"; found the service to the consumer greatly improved with the shop girls "charming, kind, neatly dressed, helpful"; he foresees that "in two or three years' time things will be a great deal easier"; and judges that "things have begun to move very fast indeed". In fact, Crankshaw's estimate is diametrically opposed to Zorza's.

Zorza is also chronically obsessed with the spectre of the return of the Beria regime. On November 27th, for example, he described the public discussion in the U.S.S.R. on a People's Militia as "an attempt to acclimatise public opinion to the return of the kind of harshness that Stalin found necessary", and even suggested that the death penalty was to be extended. He did this, though the People's Militia is a direct sequel to the Twenty-First Congress, at which it was quoted by Khrushchov as an example of the beginning of the process of "the transfer of certain State functions to public organisations".

Similarly, from the beginning of the Congress Zorza whetted the appetite of his *Manchester Guardian* readers with hopes of a trial of the anti-Party group, saying their case was obviously "intended for consideration by a court". On January 30th, when a delegate suggested they should appear before Congress, he devoted three-quarters of his day's spiel to this one remark, even hinting darkly at a "secret speech". Then, when no trial materialised, he ungracefully climbed down, again at inordinate length, on February 10th, explaining that "the action contemplated against the 'anti-Party group' was cancelled, or perhaps only postponed, at the last moment". He then made up his linage with reasons why they should still be brought to trial!

But as regards Khrushchov's words, backed up by Shvernik, Mikoyan and Shelepin in subsequent speeches, that "there were now no cases in the Soviet Union of people being tried for political offences", and the emphasis laid by Khrushchov and Shelepin on prophylactic measures, "measures that will prevent, and subsequently rule out altogether, the carrying out of acts against the community"—on all this a "Zorza Curtain" is suspended before the eyes of readers.

Crankshaw, last October, was on the brink of these same Zorza-like speculations, saying "there are many who say Khrushchov will soon start killing". However, he expressed his own personal doubts that he would do so "on a big scale" and recognised that there was "a new look in the Soviet leadership". Having revisited the U.S.S.R., he wrote on February 1st that "the Terror has gone, and nobody inside the Soviet Union feels it is likely to be resurrected". And a week later he said all the people he had met in the U.S.S.R. are "fairly deeply convinced that crude police rule is

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a thing of the past". This is at least one nail in the coffin of the "police state" propaganda which has been the ultimate stand-by of every anti-Soviet ideologist for the past forty-two years.

As regards the anti-Party group Crankshaw's line is not that of Zorza either. He suggests that Bulganin's "only sin" was to "think twice before voting", but regards Malenkov as "associated indissolubly with Stalin at his worst" and to have been "working secretly in the Stalin manner and in defiance of Party statutes". The fact that Bulganin admitted that some of the "secret" meetings were held in his office is, for some reason, suppressed by Crankshaw.

The Peasants

In the period under examination Crankshaw has kept off the peasants, but Zorza had a go on January 9th when he alleged the existence of a "Marxist theory" that "at no time should preference be given to the peasants, because by its nature the peasantry is less ready to support Communist policies. . . ."

This travesty is all the more inexcusable since Zorza claims to have studied the proceedings of last December's Plenum on agriculture at which Khrushchov once again emphasised the need for "well-appointed houses, clubs, schools and boarding schools, libraries, service establishments, good roads, electricity, radio, television, the cinema" as "real features of the Soviet countryside in the near future. . . . Our country is confidently advancing to the practical solution of a major problem of the building of Communism—the removal of the existing differences between town and countryside". And again, at the Twenty-First Congress, Khrushchov states that "in the coming seven years we intend to achieve a substantial increase in agricultural output and on this basis radically to improve rural cultural and welfare facilities. The Party's subsequent aim will be to convert the rural collective farm villages into modern urban-type communities, supplied with all the latest municipal and cultural facilities". As this aim is directly in line with Marx's "gradual abolition of the distinction betwen town and country" we are left, once again, with the spectacle of the anti-Marxist creating for his own purposes his own "Marxist theory".

When, indeed, Zorza had space to devote to the absorbingly interesting December Plenum on agriculture he chose to ignore the main questions completely, so intent was he on one of the particular bees in his bonnet, the "Khrushchov cult". It was on this subject that he already once before came unstuck, when he published a lurid account of an alleged front-page *Pravda* full-size close-up photo of Khrushchov making a speech which never even existed! In the case of the December Plenum his theme is that Khrushchov repeatedly interrupted speakers who would end up "agreeing with the point made by the interrupter". His longest example, to illustrate this, gives material for a quite different conclusion. The delegate Sitalov, back from the U.S.A., says that while he thinks Soviet heavy agricultural machinery is better, the U.S.A. is ahead in the production of smaller machines. "We must organise the production of such machines," he says, and at this moment Khrushchov interrupts, drawing the attention of the Minister of Agriculture to the point made by the delegate. How anyone in his normal senses could quote such an example to suggest a "Khrushchov cult" is beyond human comprehension.

Crankshaw in his treatment of Party matters also has leant towards attempts to discover a Khrushchov cult, and when the Twenty-First Congress was announced he described its "ostensible purpose" as being to deal with the new Plan while it would really be "a special benefit, or triumph, to mark his (Khrushchov's) personal victory". He even indulged in one of his favourite forms of speculation—as to what would happen to Furtseva, Mikoyan and Suslov. At the same time, however, he felt bound to admit that Khrushchov was surrounded by "a wide field of proved and experienced talent", and paid a tribute to the improved method of work of the Central Committee which "has held frequent and important meetings, often the speeches have been published". Not realising the nature of an Extraordinary Congress, however, he made bold to prophesy on October 15th that a new Executive would be elected, "pro-Khrushchov to a man". He did not share Zorza's determination that the Cult would be revived, saying that Khrushchov had "inherited a highly developed society" (January 18th) and in the next issue going on to say that "the Soviet Union is stronger than any conceivable candidate for the leadership, and is developing in a sleepwalking kind of way in accordance with its own inner necessity". Apart from the silly Crankshavian use of the word "sleep-walking" here, this is not at all a bad definition of Soviet democracy. He also went so far as to find the position of Khrushchov today "closer to the position of, say, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, than to that of the late Stalin" (February 2nd). And as regards his recommendation to *Observer* readers to study the section of Khrushchov's Congress speech dealing with the transition to Communism, nothing could have been warmer than his statement that it is "the most personal, lucid, persuasive and, in-

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deed, passionate statement of the Communist ideal since the days of Lenin" (February 8th). True, some characteristic jibes are also added, but even then the praise is lavish.

But when Crankshaw gets on to the relationship of Party and people he is back out of his depth. He writes, for example, of the Soviet leadership as being "perhaps more remote than it was a few years ago, in spite of Mr. Khrushchov's restless efforts to go among the people and talk to them in their own language (how close, in fact, have the recent progresses of Messrs. Gaitskell and Macmillan brought them to the people?); and it seemed to me that Mr. Khrushchov's inability to bridge this gap had been his major failure so far. It has not been for want of trying".

Consulting the People

On what does Crankshaw base these sweeping statements? The fact that the Theses for the Seven-Year Plan were discussed at meetings of over 70 million people, that nearly 4,700,000 spoke at these meetings, that 650,000 letters were sent in containing suggestions, of which 300,000 were published—is this not bringing the people into the work of government on a wider scale than ever before anywhere? And this is not exceptional, for every new major Soviet measure is now being submitted to the population for mass discussion before legislation. There is no Gaitskell-Macmillan equivalent for this whatever. How much more effective would our own Parliament be if there were.

Nor does the British press (even *The Observer*) conscientiously summarise all its letters so that the ruling party and government may have the guidance of what the people are thinking. Every five days up to the Party Congress *Pravda* provided both Party and Government with an abstract of all incoming letters.

When Crankshaw sweepingly asserts that "the average Russian" is trying to play a part in moulding the direction of affairs, or tries to draw a rigid line between a "State bureaucracy" or "Them" and the People, he is voicing the type of fallacy which comes so often from the capitalist press correspondent who chooses to ignore the actual working of the vast democratic Soviet state apparatus.

While Crankshaw mercifully spares us from any pretentions to Marxist theory, Zorza prides himself as a theoretician. We have already seen the mire into which this led him on agriculture; and of course he has been quite unable to keep his hands off the withering away of the State. He announces to his readers, *à propos* of Congress, that "there was to be no 'withering away of the State' until the full victory of communism" and that "in the meantime, progress towards communism would be made, paradoxically, by catching up with the *per capita* output of the most advanced Western Powers". *Manchester Guardian* readers presumably are unaware that Marx long ago warned that the higher stage of Communist society would only be attained "after the productive forces have increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly". It is precisely this theme which runs like a crimson thread through the whole of Khrushchov's speech to the Twenty-First Congress.

But there is a factor in the contemporary situation which Marx did not foresee, a long period of peaceful co-existence of capitalism and socialism. This has raised its own problems. Many years ago Stalin pointed out that the withering away of the state under conditions of capitalist encirclement was unthinkable. And Khrushchov has warned the Twenty-First Congress that for "as long as the Western Powers maintain their aggressive military *blocs*, it is incumbent on us to strengthen and perfect our valiant armed forces. . . . How, then, can we abolish organs whose prime purpose is to safeguard the security of the Socialist State? That would be criminal folly." But nevertheless, the handing over of some state functions to public organisations has begun, a point ignored by Zorza.

When Crankshaw wrote his book, *Russia after Stalin*, he devoted a quite disproportionate space to the *stilyagi* that we loosely term Soviet "teddy boys". It is gratifying to note that on his return from his latest visit he labels these as "only a fringe problem" while in the main he discovers Soviet youth to be "interesting, in many ways admirable, and highly self-respecting". He is struck by their "alertness and vitality" but alleges also a streak of "uncertainty . . . surprisingly close to the youth of other countries, including our own". It would be interesting to guess the result if Crankshaw had made a thorough investigation of the outlook of Soviet *industrial* youth compared with the *industrial* youth of this country today.

Foreign Policy

Let us conclude with the views of our two "experts" on foreign policy.

A favourite theme of the anti-Soviet ideologist today is the allegedly inevitable future bust-up between the U.S.S.R. and China, and Zorza goes all out on this theme, even creating a "presumed fear" in the U.S.S.R. "of a China with atomic weapons" and, in defiance of every eye-witness

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account, an "icy silence" on the part of Chou En-lai at the Twenty-First Congress. He tried to make out that the Chinese were in some way embarrassed or upset by Khrushchov's reference to a "zone of peace" in the Far East. However, in the joint statement of the Chinese and Japanese Communist Parties, issued on March 3rd, it is clearly stated that Khrushchov's proposals, including that of "a zone of peace in the Far East and the entire Pacific area, first of all, a zone free of atomic weapons . . . fully conform with the desire of the peoples in the Far East"; and that the two parties "will continue their efforts to wage a resolute struggle for the realisation of these proposals".

Crankshaw, in his present realistic mood, calmly foresees Sino-Soviet co-operation continuing into the future, with even a certain settlement of some of the Chinese population in the Soviet Far East "sooner or later" by harmonious agreement.

On Germany, Crankshaw correctly assesses the Soviet fears regarding remilitarised Germany, especially when West Germany is being rearmed as part of N.A.T.O. and West German spokesmen "turn up their noses at American arms and conceptions of warfare"; with "the Western Allies refusing to recognise the Oder-Neisse line, and West Germans freely talking about the day when the provinces lost to Poland will be recovered." It is to be hoped that, now he has put the Soviet case thus, Crankshaw's readers will understand the present Soviet attitude.

But as so often happens with Crankshaw, having made certain things relatively clear, he apparently gets in a panic that he has given away too many points to the other side, so he suddenly, without rhyme or reason, takes refuge in wild abuse. One would expect the U.S.S.R., he writes on March 8th, occupied with the Seven-Year Plan, "to live quietly", but instead we get a "constant diplomatic uproar", a "ceaseless display of brinkmanship on the part of Khrushchov", and "Moscow is back at its old revilings, attacking now Teheran, now Cairo, in the old traditional depressing tones."

Having created his Aunt Sally, Crankshaw now "explains" it by an alleged "chronic demoralisation in East Germany" or as being to strengthen Khrushchov's "position at home and perhaps *vis à vis* China."

The picture is phoney, and so also is the explanation.

There has been no "hectoring" or "brinkmanship" on the part of the Soviet Government. Crankshaw himself has given every reason for Soviet anxiety over Western (not Eastern) Germany. And the Soviet proposals for Berlin have been put without any hint at an ultimatum (except in the anti-Soviet press) and every sign of accommodation if only the West will negotiate seriously.

As regards Iran, the Soviet Government and press could hardly be expected to sit silent, having had a delegation dragged urgently to Teheran to negotiate a non-aggression pact, and then to be confronted by the Persians, in cahoots with Washington, refusing to sign even their own original draft pact.

And as far as Egypt is concerned, in view of Nasser's unbridled attacks on communism and Iraq, judicious warnings from the U.S.S.R. that he is making a fatal blunder were only to be anticipated.

A Summit Conference

However, despite what we may call his "anti-Soviet good deed for the day" on March 8th, let us not forget that a week earlier realism had seized Crankshaw sufficiently for him to write: "We should be ready to realise that it may from time to time be our turn to supplement words with deeds, if only to discover whether an occasional deed will cut any ice at all in Moscow. A most useful deed on the part of the West would be to agree to a summit conference."

Perhaps this provoked a reaction from some of the die-hards and this is why, a week later, accusations of "brinkmanship" had unreasonably to be slung at Khrushchov?

What conclusions can be drawn from the behaviour of Crankshaw and Zorza over the past six months? First, though in the same camp they are far from united in their approach to Soviet developments. Secondly, facts are making headway, and Crankshaw is increasingly having to recognise them even when such recognition is as much a blow to the classic pillars of anti-Soviet ideology as the discovery of evolution was a blow to the Book of Genesis. Thirdly, it is clear from our analysis how writers must ever more resort to open falsification in order to produce an anti-Soviet picture. Zorza solves the problem by touching on facts as little as possible. Crankshaw, reporting quite a large number of facts, finds himself weakening the position of anti-Soviet ideology quite substantially in the process. Then, as if suddenly pulling himself up, he throws out some wild allegation about "brinkmanship".

The expressions of anti-Soviet propaganda will continue, for capitalism must, for the sake of its own morale and its own self-preservation, strive to perpetuate belief in its own superiority. But the anti-Soviet ideologists are having a very uphill task.

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The Strikes in the Belgian Borinage*

Jean Terfve

THE crisis of the coal industry in Belgium is all the more serious because Belgium is a coal producing country and coal is the sole source of energy in the country.

Old coal measures run from the Borinage to Liège in Wallonia. The northern coal basin—in Limburg—has only been exploited in recent times; the measures there are relatively new and the yield is high. Both in the south and in the north there are still immense coal beds which have not been exploited, and these reserves could cover all the country's requirements for dozens and dozens of years. But in order to exploit them in a rational way new pits must be dug and some already in exploitation must be deepened, and this means that big investments are needed.

The extraction of coal, however, comes up against certain difficulties.

The first is the shortage of Belgian workers who are still prepared to work in the mines. For the last thirty years, in fact, there has been a mass movement of Belgian workers away from the mines, and now they only work on the surface or in a few privileged jobs underground. Sixty per cent of the labour in the mines is foreign, particularly Italian. This situation has arisen because of the bad conditions of safety and health in this sector of production. Marcinelle, the most appalling of a series of mining catastrophes, has not been forgotten. The ravages of silicosis account for the fact that the average age of miners pensioned off is under forty.

Then also, a considerable part of the pits in the southern coalfields are old, or in any case not sufficiently modernised. As the costs of sinking the pits have been wiped out in depreciation long ago, the mining employer does not worry about making further investments.

Finally, in the southern coalfields there are also natural obstacles in the way of the full use of mechanisation, because the seams of exploitable coal are thin and irregular.

Since 1952 the Coal and Steel Community comes into the picture. Belgium is the one of the six countries of the "Community" in which the conditions for the production of coal are the most unfavourable. For this reason, Belgium benefited for five years from a system of so-called equal distribution, Belgian coals benefiting from a levy on the price of German and Dutch coal. This support was intended to make possible the modernisation and rationalisation of the Belgian mines in order to bring down the costs of production.

But this "transitory" period was also a period in which demand for coal was high, a period dominated by the need to make use of all available resources. Moreover, the "boom" was thought to be unending and demand was expected to be constantly rising, so foreign coal began to be imported. Long-term contracts for the supply of coal were signed, especially with the United States.

This period in which things were very easy led to an intensification of production, without much thought of the future and especially without any particular attention to modernisation; available capital or the subsidies which were being given were not made use of for investment.

The trouble began suddenly, when industry began to decline and demand collapsed. In the space of a few months, an exceptionally high piling-up of disposable stocks of coal supervened. At present, Belgian stocks alone are nearing eight million tons.

The producing countries immediately set about trying to safeguard themselves and secure a privileged position, if possible within the framework of the Coal and Steel Community, or even in opposition to it.

It is in this context—anarchic production, fierce crisis, and pressure from better-placed competitors—that Belgium became the sector of least resistance, the sector which was called upon to make the maximum sacrifices. And within this "sacrificed" Belgium, the most vulnerable sector was the Borinage, with its many marginal mines. It was here that the so-called plan to restore health to the industry provided for the closing of eleven pits within a short period.

* From *Democratie Nouvelle*, April 1959.

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In fact, for this region the "restoration of health" is almost a death sentence. For 150 years the region has lived on its coal industry.

It is true that the sharp crisis of January-February 1959 had been preceded by minor crises. It is true that partial closing of pits had already taken place—each time being met with stoppages and in some cases by the occupation of the threatened pits by the miners.

But the plans to dismantle the pits were carried through with extreme prudence, with delays, at intervals, and above all with a skilful use of place and time. On this issue successive governments had adopted a system of subterfuges, temporising and half measures, since they were afraid of directly inflaming public opinion.

The conflict broke out suddenly, at the end of January, after warning notices had been sent to a number of pits, and especially the Crachet pit (Frameries). To the people of the Borinage, the abandonment of this pit seemed to be an error, even a provocation. Recently deepened and modernised, the Crachet pit had just swallowed up two milliard francs in investments, and its up-to-date works fronted the highway.

The strike came from the rank and file, without any previous trade union decision: it was the violent reaction of people threatened with disaster.

Why was it that the mining employers and the big financial groups which dominate Belgium's economy seemed not only to accept the pit closures, but even to hurry them forward?

It is because the mining capitalist is very seldom exclusively interested in the mines. The same trusts are to be found in control of the mines and of the big metallurgical and chemical undertakings. These powerful financial groups are concerned primarily with the most profitable sectors, and are ready to torpedo their own coal mines. What they are chiefly interested in is to get cheap supplies of coal, and the profits they will make by doing this will largely compensate them for the losses they will suffer from abandoning the marginal pits. The example of the "Cockerill-Ougrée" trust is typical in this respect: coal mining employer in the Borinage, it is a steel employer in Liège, Antwerp and Luxembourg. If the Ruhr or the United States can supply its furnaces with cheaper coal than it produces for itself in the Borinage—then up with German or American coal, and so much the worse for the Borinage.

But before deciding to abandon the country's wealth and to close down the pits, the trusts organised themselves to make the best use in their own interests of the subsidies under the Marshall Plan and the Coal and Steel Community or from the Belgian taxpayers. Between 1946 and 1958 the coal employers have squandered some 40,000 million Belgian francs.

Given in principle to carry out the modernisation and re-equipment of the pits—but without any control—at least a quarter of these millions have gone to swelling dividends and bonuses. It is true that there were also capital investments, but they were made without any general plan and took no account of the public interest. Thus some of the investments have been the means of passing very lucrative orders to subsidiaries of the same financial group. And on the other hand the trusts at the same time agreed to sales of coal below the market price. The State paid the deficit, and the trusts pocketed the profit, for as it happened seller and buyer were the same person.

The policy of the trusts—a policy of deliberate Malthusianism—has therefore always ignored the interests of the working class and of the nation.

What connection have the strikes got with the problems of the Coal and Steel Community?

The thing that gives the Borinage strikes their *general significance* is first the light that they have thrown on the Coal and Steel Community, on its role, the direction in which it is moving, its fundamental inability to play its famous role as an independent and super-national organisation which its defenders have always tried to make of it, its inability to resolve inter-capitalist contradictions, and the imperious pressure brought to bear on it by the big capitalist monopolies and particularly the German monopolies who control the coal riches of the Ruhr.

Against the "European" Institutions

Problems which up to now have remained confused, and harsh criticisms—which previously have only been made by the Communists and a few particularly clear-sighted and shrewd progressive elements—have now suddenly become clear to the masses. The struggles which they entered on were not only directed against the mining employers and the policy of the government, but at the same time against the Coal and Steel Community, the incarnation of the great denationalised trusts.

The second aspect—which however is complementary to the first—is that hostility to the Coal and Steel Community is beginning to develop an atmosphere of distrust in regard to the European institutions, and particularly in regard to the Common Market.

For the masses generally, the Coal and Steel Community and the Common Market have become closely linked together—they are two aspects of the same political and economic

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orientation, and their character as instruments created for the trusts and dominated by them is becoming increasingly clear.

The miners' struggle against the closing of their pits became a more general struggle arising from the refusal of the working class to bear the costs of an economic crisis and from the workers' determination to defend their purchasing power.

In Belgium as in other capitalist countries, the working class has gained a clearer understanding of the possibilities of struggle. If up to now it had been generally held among the masses influenced by reformism that the working class cannot hope to impose its demands on the employers during a period of economic recession, today the desire to fight has taken the place of submission.

The working class intends to prevent the burden of the economic difficulties resulting from a depression being placed on its shoulders. It is striving to make the capitalists themselves bear the consequences of a situation for which they are responsible.

This is the sign of a clear political maturity.

It is manifested by concern to safeguard, in various forms, their standard of living: to safeguard themselves against arbitrary dismissals (in the textile, metallurgical and oil industries); to secure payment of substantial compensation in the event of closures; to demand supplementary unemployment payments.

The Demand for Nationalisation

Moreover, the great fight waged by the miners to defend their right to work has shown that, in the actual conditions of the capitalist regime, satisfaction of immediate demands implies attacks on the very basis of the regime: today it is no longer possible to provide any proper solution to the claims of the miners without affecting the structural foundations of capitalism.

The idea of deep-going reforms, of structural changes, even of nationalisation of industries, has ceased to be far-off and abstract. It seems more and more as if it is the final point, the necessary and direct projection, of action for the demands of the workers. This is a very important change which will have big consequences in the coming struggles. It helps much more than any theoretical explanation could to make the dialectical unity between the struggle for immediate demands and the struggle for the basic transformation of the system something that is living and can be felt.

It is interesting to note that in the programme of the Christian trade unions as well as in those of a socialist outlook the slogan of nationalisation is to be found. The concrete content of the slogan is different for each; but for both it represents a concession to the pressure of the rank and file and at the same time a diversionary slogan. The slogan of nationalisation presented as a far-off objective helps to smother the immediate demands, the immediately effective slogan. It makes it possible to justify the inaction of the present by the perspectives of the future.

Defence Committee

There have been some special forms of struggle which should be noted. Several weeks before, in face of the threat that grew more and more clear, and in view of the hesitations on the part of the trade union organisations, the workers of the Borinage had looked for and adopted an instrument of struggle which is far from traditional: a Committee for the Defence of the Borinage had been set up by the mineworkers.

The formation of this committee corresponded so well with what the workers desired that it immediately became a very broad committee, bringing together representatives of the four political parties, of the trade union organisations, of the middle classes etc.

It was this committee which gave the first impetus to the struggle. Its role was somewhat weakened in the course of the struggle, because it was the scene of conflicts between the groups. What the socialists—political or trade union—were preoccupied with was to take over control of the struggle and to put it into the hands of the "Committee of Action", grouping together all socialist organisations, in order to direct it as they wanted and to try to get from it the maximum electoral advantage. The preoccupation of the Christians and the Liberals, also strongly influenced by electoralism, was to canalise action and to prevent it from being transformed into an anti-government demonstration.

The Communist Party representatives in the Committee of Defence, conscious of the value and the importance of this committee, which realised a higher form of unity, did everything they could to give it the right orientation, to help it to put forward slogans that corresponded with real needs and with the degree of intensity of the struggle, in order to give this struggle the necessary active and popular forms.

From the very start, the strike took on a mass character in the Borinage. It was also an extremely active strike, with the posting of strike pickets, the setting up of barricades on the main roads of the Borinage, large rallies of strikers, and vast demonstrations in which considerable numbers of women took part.

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Working Class Unity

In the course of the struggle real working class unity was established—unity going beyond the limits of the working class.

And yet, what efforts the employers, the Government and their press made to divide the workers, to set against each other Flemish and Walloons, Italians and Belgians, Socialist and Christian trade unions! What efforts they made to isolate the strikers, to present them as "savages" and "irresponsible" people!

It can be stated that all these efforts were repulsed, and the Communist Party's campaign in support of unity in the struggle certainly contributed to this.

In the meetings of strikers, as in the strike pickets charged with guarding the barricades that were set up at many points in the Borinage, Borinage miners and Italians stood shoulder to shoulder, and their slogans "Morte al capitalismo!" and "le Borinage veut vivre" resounded together in the demonstrations.

As we know, the miners did not stand alone in the struggle; employees, administrative personnel, owners of small businesses (interested in keeping the pits going), artisans, traders, teachers, came to their support. In the Borinage, the movement embraced the whole population; shops and schools were closed, along with the pits and the workshops. Unanimity was complete.

As for the role played by the various trade union organisations, in the mining sector the unions cover hardly a quarter of the mineworkers. Foreign miners are not in a position (because of pestering by the police) to make full use of their trade union rights.

The miners are divided between two unions: one affiliated to the Belgian General Federation of Labour, under Socialist control, and the other linked with the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions. Both of these unions had shown indecision and weakness in the course of the fights which preceded the big strike of January 1959, at the time when previous closures of pits were taking place.

The Christians, who are very weak in the southern coalfield, made use there of extremist agitational slogans. In Limburg, where they have dominating influence, they showed exceptional caution and moderation.

On the Socialist side, too, there were hesitations and contradictions. The leaders were in fact in agreement with the policy of the employers and the Coal and Steel Community on a number of points; they believed that the closures were inevitable, in some cases even that they were necessary. And their political attachment to the Coal and Steel Community and the European orientation which it means for them led them not to fight against the decisions of the High Authority.

But an intense working class pressure worked on them in the opposite direction. Hence their anxiety to save appearances and to devote their main effort to finding solutions along the lines of temporary compromises, delays, guarantees of re-employment, and so on. Their general tactics consisted in accepting the pit closures one by one, in trying to put a brake on mass actions, to postpone them to a later date, to put them into safe channels. And they did their best to limit actions which were in progress, to prevent their co-ordination and above all to prevent them from spreading.

The Borinage Strike

Here, in broad outline, is what happened in January and February 1959.

The strike having begun—without orders from above—what was necessary was to go beyond the region affected and to organise the active solidarity of the working class as a whole. The miners of Wallonia, who were also threatened with pit closures and growing unemployment, soon came into the movement. So did a considerable part of the working masses of the Charleroi and Central regions.

But the Christian trade unions did everything they could to prevent the Limburg miners from joining their Wallonian comrades in the strike. They succeeded. The objective aimed at by the Christian trade union leaders, who have representatives within the Government, was not to endanger this Government, while at the same time not disavowing the strike movement, which they felt was a real expression of the people's will. It is this double purpose that explains their verbal radicalism in Wallonia and their determined grip on the brakes at Limburg.

The trade union leaders of the Belgian General Federation of Labour also understood the depth and breadth of the battle that had been begun. They saw in it a means of renewing their links with the working masses which had been weakened under the Van Acker Government. They saw in it too a means to putting the Government in difficulties, and some of the right wing leaders no doubt even thought that, thanks to the strike, they would be able to establish favourable conditions for setting up a Socialist-Catholic Government. This explains particularly the pains taken by the most important Socialist Party leaders to take part in the action.

Apart from the manoeuvres of certain Right leaders, we must also see the pressure of the

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Socialist masses in the participation of the Socialist leaders in the strike and in the positive slogans they adopted. Since the June 1958 elections the Socialist rank and file had in fact been affected by far-reaching ideas, by the desire to "return to the source" and to give a really socialist content to the Socialist Party.

It is nevertheless true that at the very moment when the success of the movement depended on the solidarity of the steel workers of Liège, a trade union leader refused to give the strike order which could have won victory.

The higher trade union leaderships had two concerns:

—to reach agreement on a compromise basis with the employers, and to preserve the collaboration with them which had been long established; and

—not to strike a mortal blow at the Coal and Steel Community and the structure of European integration to which they are tied by political necessities.

This was their policy throughout, and it helped the Government to bring to success the negotiations in which it had skilfully taken the initiative from the early hours of the conflict.

The Communist Party's Policy

The attitude taken by the Communist Party can be seen as infinitely more correct and coherent. At each coal crisis it has centred its activity on one first immediate slogan: stop the pit closures until there has been a complete re-examination of the coal problem from the standpoint of the needs of the country and the interests of the workers.

This slogan of an immediate halt to the closures is the one that from the very first takes account of the anxieties of the miners who are threatened, and best creates the conditions for their unity of action.

Moreover, this first slogan is supplemented by a second: where a pit closure proves to be unavoidable, it must not be ordered before the substitute industries which the Government talks of are really established.

A third demand was put forward: in cases of dismissals or unemployment, the employer to undertake at his own cost a supplementary allowance to the workers affected, to cover minimum living costs. This means economic protection for the worker and at the same time it maintains his minimum purchasing power.

This is in itself an obstacle to dismissals, since the prospect of having to make supplementary allowances in such cases may influence the employer's decision.

And finally, the requirement that the question of nationalisation should be examined provides the link between immediate demands and the future perspective, making them complementary to each other.

A last point: in view of the existence of the Coal and Steel Community and of a treaty based on it, the Party cites the safeguarding clauses provided in the treaty, and demands that all new pit closures should be deferred until next year.

These complete slogans, put forward in succession and based on the need to find practical solutions without delay, penetrated very slowly. This slowness was due both to the opposition from the political and trade union leaderships, Christian as well as Socialist, and at the same time to insufficient work of the Party in the miners' trade union organisations.

Nevertheless, the slogans made headway and radiated out, gradually being brought to the consciousness of the miners.

Proof of this was given in the course of the sharp crisis of January-February, 1959, when the slogans worked out by the Communist Party were taken up and put forward by all those who were faced with the actual situation, whether trade unions or broader defence organisations.

At the great rallies held in the coalfields at times of the greatest tension during the strike, calls to struggle in order to enforce measures that would safeguard the existence of the miners, and to put a stop to all pit closures in 1959, were taken up as the central slogans by the leaders of the Belgian General Federation of Labour and by the President of the Socialist Party himself.

The fact that these slogans were taken up while the speakers were careful not to indicate their origin in no way diminishes their value.

The Struggle Goes On

The Communist Party, which played an important part in the orientation of the struggle, in determining the slogans of struggle, is now devoting its attention to the development of the situation, to the aims of tomorrow—this is brought out in its appeal issued on March 2nd:

"This is no time for despondency.

"The economic situation is bad. Empoyers and government, after being struck with alarm by the action of the people, have temporarily recovered their self-possession.

"They aim to pursue their crisis policy, to make the small people pay for the economic difficulties, while they keep their capital out of sight and the Christian-Social-Liberal gang refuses to cut down the military expenditure.

"This is no time for anger, resentment or division.

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"Quarrels between workers of different views, of different regions, of different nationalities and different trade unions can only be of service to the enemy.

"To act in anger and desert the Belgian General Federation of Labour can only weaken the working-class front, which the needs of the anti-capitalist struggle compel us to strengthen.

"Let us regroup our forces, which have been tested in the unsuccessful struggle that is now over: we have fought the first great battle against the crisis—there will be others."

The negative elements which are dominant in the results are in danger of being considered by the working class movement as a whole as a defeat, of weakening the confidence of the masses of the workers in what is really possible, and of undermining the credit of the trade union organisation.

Nevertheless, the political side of the struggles is important. The examples of unity, demonstrations of the will to fight, the possibilities of widening the anti-monopolies fight, demonstrations of active struggle against the crisis, the linking up of action for immediate demands with the socialist perspective—all these form a group of experiences which the working class will be ready to make use of in a very near future.

Discussion contributions:

On the Nature of Music

G. Hudson

I WOULD like to make a few comments on the series of articles on music: in particular the one by Jack Dunman.

We must indeed begin by "recognising that sounds and patterns of sound have emotional effects on the human brain." But to counterpose this to the historical approach to the significance of music, seems to me to be a serious mistake.

Music obviously could only "help man in his labour" or "respond to the demands of everyday life" if Dunman's statement were true.

The point which arises is: to what extent is man's capacity for music innate—in the sense that blue eyes are—and to what extent has it developed, like language and customs, through living in society with his fellow men? It seems more or less obvious that the capacity has developed, historically speaking, from almost nothing: that music and man's capacity to appreciate it, has advanced from something very rudimentary to the immensely complicated and more abstract modern music. This development is recapitulated, so to speak, in the development of the individual in modern society. It is by no means clear that there are even certain sounds which would be universally considered "pleasant" or "unpleasant" without reference to past experience. It is by no means clear that even simple rhythms would find a universal response without such reference, particularly to physical action. And it has been demonstrated recently that tone-deafness, previously thought to be innate in some children, is really a matter for education: that in a sense we are all tone-deaf and only experience can remedy this.

Comrade Dunman says that some of the extraordinarily powerful effects of music may be "reinforced" or "modified" by association or experience etc. I would say that these effects are almost entirely *created* by these things: not in a simple fashion, or mechanically but in the immensely complicated way that all our ideas and feelings and art develop in the course of living in, growing

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up with and reacting upon a particular human society.

It is a fact, which Comrade Dunman mentions, that other civilisations have their own music, and that this music is almost meaningless to us without some form of education in it. (Does Comrade Dunman imagine that a Chinese baby, brought up in European society, would have any advantage in this respect?)

It is also a fact that bourgeois music could not have arisen, 1,000 years ago, just as Shaw's plays could not have been written then, nor Renoir's paintings painted, nor Mayakovsky's poetry composed, nor sputniks orbited around the earth. Music has developed and become more complicated as society has evolved: and although we may gain pleasure from listening to early music, generally speaking the satisfaction is less the earlier the music. Most of the music we enjoy most is bourgeois music and we, the listeners, live in a capitalist society. It is extremely unlikely that any of it would have meant anything, even to an educated person, living 1,000 years ago. None of it would mean much to a twentieth-century Chinese who had not been educated to it; nor does it mean much to large numbers of our fellow citizens—such is our education.

Christopher Caudwell discussed the origins and meaning of poetry in his book *Illusion and Reality* and he says much that is of relevance here. He shows how a word like "rose" has come to mean so much more than a species of plant:

> "Sexual love, spring, a sunset, the song of a nightingale and the ancient freshness of the rose are enriched by all the complex history of emotion and experience shared in common by a thousand generations. None of these reactions is instinctive; none is personal. To a monkey or the man reared like Mowgli by a wolfish foster mother, the rose would be something perhaps edible, a bright colour. To the poet it is the rose of Keats, of Anacreon, of Hafiz, of Ovid and of Jules Laforgue. For this world of art is the world of social emotion, of words and images which have gathered, as the result of the life experience of all, emotional associations common to all."

In the same way we may imagine how certain sounds and combinations of sound come to mean much more than the physicist might ascribe to them. In the course of living in this society, imbibing its music and traditions, and educating ourselves to appreciate music, we form this capacity which Comrade Dunman seems to think is innate.

Margaret Meade, a non-Marxist anthropologist, has shown how "masculine" and "feminine" temperament and behaviour are things which vary with the type of social organisation and are not fundamentally linked with sex as we always tend to assume. If we can see that even some of these things are social products, it is an easy step to understanding how much more so must be the capacity to appreciate and desire music.

The chief virtue of Marxism is the way in which it enables us to think dialectically, to be consistently materialist, and thus to realise that man is a social being who changes and develops within an evolving society; that without this development he would have remained an animal and there would be no music. I think that Dunman's ideas *are* idealist and that he fails to grasp as only a Marxist can grasp, how the human mind forms and develops in society; in our case, capitalist society. It is difficult to imagine how music, even though it deals with emotions rather than with ideas, can remain unrelated to politics and political ideas which affect every other art form.

The rest of his article was well worth while, and few socialists would disagree with its general conclusions.

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On the Jewish Problem

L. Zaidman

"MARXISM TODAY" is doing a good service to the progressive forces by offering the possibility for a discussion in its columns of "An old problem"—the Jewish problem.

Whether we like it or not, problems associated with the Jews receive considerable attention and succeed in influencing, for better or for worse, wide sections of people. Thus, anti-Semitic propaganda has affected from time to time enormous masses of people and resulted not only in the annihilation of vast numbers of Jews (as occurred during the last world war), but also in diverting social and political discontent into wrong channels at the expense of the democratic development of peoples. More recently, both Zionism and the cold-war anti-Soviet propagandists have used the concern aroused by problems affecting Jews to divert large masses of Jews towards sterile and harmful policies and to stimulate generally considerable anti-Soviet feeling and activities.

In such conditions it is therefore essential for Communists to define as clearly and simply as possible both our estimation of the problem, and what we believe are the lines along which to achieve a favourable solution to it.

I believe that Comrade Ramelson has given a satisfactory outline both of the problem and the lines along which it will resolve itself in the future.

What is the essence of the Jewish problem? It is the problem of any small group of people in class society which can be utilised by reactionary forces to divert from themselves prevailing social and political discontent. Jews are not and were not the only group to suffer from this consequence of class society. In fact, Israel itself evidences a policy of discrimination against its Arab minority.

The task of progressive people in the present conditions of class society is to facilitate both the favourable development of the struggle against capitalism, and the victory of socialism, which will finally end the basis of both anti-Semitism and race-hatred.

At the present moment, the greatest danger to resolving this task among Jews comes from the protagonists of Zionist ideas—i.e. the protagonists of Jewish nationhood—irrespective of the cloak under which they present their views.

Equating Israel, the Jewish State in the Middle East, with Zionism, and using the establishment of it as evidence of the correctness of the Zionist views, the Zionists are responsible for bringing about those consequences tabulated by Comrade Ramelson in his article:

> "(*a*) Making aliens of the overwhelming majority of Jews in the countries where they were born and brought up, and towards whose culture they have made a considerable contribution.
>
> "(*b*) The withdrawal of many Jews from the political struggle of the working class, not only leading to self-imposed isolation, but depriving the working class of valuable help in the fight for socialism.
>
> "(*c*) Weakening the class sense of Jews by preaching a non-existent 'common national interest' involving class collaboration within Jewry; and seeking support for imperialism on the ground of 'national interests'."

Unfortunately too many people allow themselves to be carried away by spurious arguments. To too many Jews and non-Jews the existence of the State of Israel is the significant fact, and the ideas and conditions which brought it into existence, are irrelevant. The fact that Zionism has served as the disruptive tool of British imperialism in the Middle East, or that it is now the outpost of American vested interests, is of no consequence to them. The fact that 900,000 Arabs, who have resided in the areas of present-day Israel for centuries, are now hankering after their former homelands, is ignored and frowned upon by a people which itself has suffered exile as part of the policy of disruption, persecution and race-hatred.

The indifference and disregard shown to what has been done and is happening to the former inhabitants of Israel—and to those residing there now—is a shameful episode in the history of the Jews of Israel and outside. It might be hoped that with better information, larger numbers of Jews, particularly working class Jews, will decide on a different policy regarding Zionism.

But just as confusing and harmful as Zionist ideas are for the Jews—and non-Jews—are the views of some of those critical of the conditions of the Jews in the U.S.S.R.

It is an undeniable fact that with the 1917 October Revolution—and with every such overthrow of reactionary capitalist regimes in the countries of People's Democracy—the Jews emerged as a free section of the people, enjoying

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their gains and making themselves part of the new pattern of life which the ending of capitalism made way for.

Once the Ghetto walls were demolished, Jews lost no time in entering occupations and places formerly forbidden to them; they took the fullest advantage of developing educational and cultural activities formerly unavailable to them. The result was the emergence of new Jewish people. Of course, it would be an illusion to believe that this process went on evenly everywhere—but there can be no doubt that considerable sections of Jews in the Soviet Union were affected by these positive developments.

It is in this context that the question of Yiddish is to be considered. In Tsarist Russia, prior to 1917, Jews, herded forcibly into the Ghettoes, spoke Yiddish because, by force of circumstance, this was the only means of communication they knew and had in common. Even my own mother, brought up in Rumania, where Jews were not subjected to the Ghetto conditions of the Tsarist regime enforced on the Russian Jews, used only Yiddish as her means of communication. When I returned in 1912 to Barlad, a small Rumanian town with some 1,000 Jewish families, I had to learn to speak Yiddish because this was their main spoken tongue. Is it therefore any surprise that "segregation in the Ghettoes . . . created a specific Yiddish culture depicting Ghetto life"?—a view which Alec Waterman frowns on in his contribution to the discussion. Of course, this "specific Yiddish culture depicting Ghetto life" was the life of the working class and poor Jews—who constituted the overwhelming mass of the population of the Ghettoes.

Of course, "the rich and educated spoke Hebrew or the country's language", as Alec Waterman writes. For them, the Ghetto walls were flexible. They could live in the big towns etc. These facts still more justify the view that Ghetto life conditioned the emergence of Yiddish as the tongue of the Ghetto Jews—and it was the Ghetto life which conditioned the themes of the Yiddish culture of that day.

But where and when the Ghetto walls break down—and when opportunities present themselves for enriching one's cultural background—Yiddish is replaced by the languages of the new environment. This is the fact—and no amount of denials or pointing at today's "flourishing" Yiddish centres can alter the facts. Alec Waterman, a very great Yiddish enthusiast himself, a prolific reader and speaker of Yiddish, will admit that in his own circle he has little success, as generally Yiddish has little success in Britain.

In noting these facts one has to take good care not to be subjective and to pass judgment in accordance with one's likes and dislikes. There is no denying that in its time Yiddish served as a great avenue of expression for large numbers of people. Hemmed in by the Ghetto walls, living in untold misery, deprived of liberty and freedom of development, subjected to the vilest forms of discrimination and persecution, many Jewish writers and many progressive fighters found, and gave expression to through Yiddish, their progressive ideas and dreams for a better world. But this is a feature not only for those using Yiddish. All peoples find in their spoken word the inspiration for a better world, hatred of oppressors and encouragement in their struggles for liberation.

If the factors making for the decline of Yiddish in the world at large are true, they are stronger yet in the case of the U.S.S.R. Before the Second World War, the process of integration of Jews into the framework of Soviet society was very advanced. The problem of ensuring the continued existence of the Jews of the Soviet Union as an entity was apparent very early after the October Revolution, and Kalinin in a book published in 1935 draws attention to the subject, as follows:

> "Moscow, for example, cannot preserve any specific national characteristics. It represents a city collective of all nationalities within the U.S.S.R. . . . How much does the average Jewish worker who has worked in Moscow for ten years preserve of his Jewish nationality? Very little. Life in Moscow is multi-national in character, and specific national characteristics tend to become slowly obliterated."

It is argued however that Yiddish has suffered severely as a result of the abuses which took place during the latter period of Stalin's life. No one can deny that Yiddish and many closely associated with things Yiddish suffered severely during that period, nor that this policy has left lasting marks upon the use of Yiddish.

From reports one knows that considerable efforts are being made to reinvigorate Yiddish, by those still imbued with a love of and a desire and need to express themselves in Yiddish. Concerts and readings in Yiddish are a feature of Soviet cultural life.

Mikoyan, when interviewed on this question during his recent visit to the United States, pointed out the following:

> "In my country all peoples enjoy freedom for the development of their culture. They can have their theatres, their literature, and that includes the Jews. However, the Jewish population has merged with the Russians in Russian culture so fully that Jews participate in general culture and literature, in the Russian stage and Russian

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> literature. There are many Jewish writers who consider themselves Russian and who prefer to write Rusian. We cannot interfere in that matter. This is a matter for the Jewish intelligentsia. We do create all conditions in which Jewish and Russian literatures and the literatures of all other Soviet peoples should have full opportunities for their development, writing and creation."

Personally I am of the opinion that the matter of Yiddish is not yet resolved one way or the other. I am sure that greater facilities than those available at present for the use and extension of Yiddish cultural activities in the U.S.S.R. would be forthcoming to the degree that increased interest in and use of the Yiddish language becomes apparent.

The issue of Yiddish in the Soviet Union has been used as a stick to beat the Soviet Union and to besmirch the tremendous record of achievements and advances gained by the Soviet peoples, including its Jewish citizens. Insufficient objectivity was shown by some in our own Party. These comrades were not helped either when the case about Yiddish was hinged on to the question as to whether the Jews were a nation. The fact remains that though the Jews do not enjoy the prerequisites of a nation in the Marxist sense, they have spoken Yiddish as their mother tongue in large numbers in a number of countries over a long period. Many of them still do—and some may still so desire. If sufficient so desire, then Yiddish will continue as one of the many languages used by the Socialist family of nations.

Reuben Falber

COMRADE Waterman attempts to contest Ramelson's claim that the Yiddish language has ceased to develop by cataloguing Yiddish activities in America. Unfortunately for him, in the *Jewish Chronicle* of April 17th, an American correspondent describes the decline of Yiddish speaking and reading:

> "Most of the Yiddish playhouses have been replaced by English-speaking off-Broadway theatres. Yiddish newspapers began to merge with one another several years ago, and a large number have disappeared. The old-timers deplore the passing of the language; are constantly nostalgic about the 'good old days' and perpetuate the fiction that Yiddishkeit is only temporarily eclipsed. They dutifully buy their Yiddish publications, listen to their much curtailed Yiddish language radio programme, and quietly but futilely make propaganda for the Cause."

Comrade Waterman could indeed pass for one of these old-timers except that he wraps his nostalgic laments up in "Marxist" language and tries to blind us with science.

Britain is not included among the countries where Yiddish flourishes. How does Yiddish fare in Britain? A few small groups struggle manfully to keep it going, publishing papers read only by a tiny handful, maintaining a sparsely attended theatre, but making no impact on the life of the Jewish people.

The most prominent Jewish writers write their books, plays and poetry in English, not Yiddish; indeed, it is doubtful whether more than a few can write Yiddish. What is more, they are ceasing to write about Jewish themes or draw inspiration from Jewish life.

Not very long ago a prominent Jewish writer who, since the war, has made a reputation as a successful novelist, wrote in a left paper attacking the Soviet Union for "suppressing" the language of his parents, and then had the brass nerve to admit that he could neither speak nor read Yiddish.

Comrade Ramelson's description of Yiddish (a description which Comrade Waterman distorts) is neither ignorant nor offensive to Yiddish. Did Yiddish exist before the Jews were forced into the Ghettoes of Central and Eastern Europe? And does not Comrade Ramelson say of Yiddish culture that its "essence was the depicting of Ghetto life and a yearning for revolt against such intolerable conditions"?

Of course the rich Jews hated Yiddish. They tried to solve the problem by licking the boots of the local bourgeoisie, buying their way into their ranks, and sometimes in the process echoing their cruder anti-Semitic expressions. Always they have cried that they were "different" from the great mass of Jewry, and had freed themselves from the characteristics which, exaggerated and distorted out of all proportion, form the shot and shell of much of the filthiest anti-Semitic propaganda. So the Yiddish spoken by the poorer Jews was hated by rich Jews, and so were the poor Jews themselves. Alas, that's a way the rich have.

But Waterman goes on to say that Yiddish became "a weapon of the working class and poor Jews". What nonsense! As well describe German as a weapon of proletarian revolution because *Das Kapital* was written in that tongue.

Sholem Aleichem wasn't the only one who could write Yiddish. Hasn't Comrade Waterman ever met the reactionary who could speak Yiddish? Surely the history of the international socialist movement for the past sixty or more

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years provides numerous examples of counter-revolutionary, anti-Soviet characters capable of putting their filth into Yiddish.

This kind of argument is presented with a quotation from Lenin and talk about Leninist principles, as though the classic writings of Marxism were part of the Talmud. But doesn't Marxism also help us to understand how things change and develop?

The development of bourgeois democracy broke down the walls of the Ghettoes and enabled Jews to move, work and live more freely with non-Jews. At the same time it began to break down the concentration of Jews into one or two districts, sometimes the most overcrowded localities. Half a million Jews in Moscow may not be a great concentration. There are nearly a quarter of a million in London, yet the great pre-war concentration in the East End has broken up to a very considerable extent, and almost every locality has its Jewish population. I don't know how the Jewish population is spread in Moscow and Vilna—does Comrade Waterman?

In their changed circumstances the rigid forms of religious observance and ritual clashed with the desire to "get on" and religious practice became more flexible, usually in face of hostility from those who sought to preserve the past. At the same time the use of Yiddish has decreased considerably and in Britain, at any rate, is now used by Jews only to a negligible degree.

All this has brought about far-reaching changes in the relations between Jews and non-Jews and the internal relations of the Jewish communities. Is it therefore surprising that under the impact of the greatest act of liberation in the history of mankind—the Russian Revolution, a revolution which swept away the worst oppressors known to Jewry before Hitler—there should be changes in the position of the Jews?

Of course the older Jews celebrated their newly won freedom by printing more books in Yiddish, more Yiddish schools and so on. But for the younger Jews the October Revolution opened vistas their parents and grandparents could not and did not dream of. They could enter the universities, professions, industries, government and administration of a great country—and this is precisely what they did. The old-timers might regret the fact that they spoke, read and wrote Russian and not Yiddish, but they emerged into sunlight after centuries of darkness and oppression, and made a not inconsiderable contribution to Soviet life and socialist construction.

Comrade Ramelson's article may not be the last word on the subject, but at least it does represent an attempt to examine the problems objectively and to do this on the basis of the facts at our disposal and not second-hand reports.

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